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RANCH LIFE

IN

SOUTHERN KANSAS AND
THE INDIAN TERRITORY

As told by a Novice.

HOW A FORTUNE WAS MADE IN CATTLE.

By BENJAMIN S. MILLER.

New York:
Fless & Ridge Printing Company,
[illegible] Fifth Avenue.
1896.

Copyright, 1896, by Benjamin S. Miller.

TO MY WIFE

This memory is affectionately dedicated—her encouragement was its mainspring and mainstay.

THE AUTHOR.

THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION.

Many, indeed most people write books for money and notoriety—so do we. This little book is a simple statement of facts gathered as the years went by, and garnered. Unfriendly criticism as to its literary merit is laughed at—we won't have one bit of it for the balance, as the health of the critic might be endangered. Our blood is still at the same temperature as it was a few years ago, ozonized by Texas winds which touched the hills and hollows of the B. I. T., "Beautiful Indian Territory," as they swept northward.

A halo of romance entwines about the word "cowboy," and the life, many times exaggerated and embellished in song and story, is nevertheless, and has been, as fascinating and generous a life as any outside of railroading and soldiering. It is possible to "soldier" on the range, but most cowboys do not.

The magazine articles of a prominent New Yorker on range matters are most excellent and undoubtedly accurate, but they have reference almost entirely to a section of country—"The Great Northwest"—where the cattle business is conducted on a different scale from that of the Indian Territory, which has never been properly aired in print.

The gentleman author who has been and is so prominent, is accused by his political opponents of being a "tenderfoot" so far as range work is concerned; he may have been, but he has caught on to the vernacular all the same.

We are detailing these facts for lucre. If they prove one-quarter as interesting to any who purchase as they are to us, our aim will have been accomplished. We could give references, but don't have to. Any one who differs with any statement made in this work, will kindly call; we are always at home.

With these few remarks, we turn this book adrift.

The Author.

CHAPTER I.

Some years ago, while a friend and myself were shooting pigeons at the feed-yard of a neighboring farmer in Iowa, we talked of the profit in feeding cattle. We were told that with corn at a fair figure, six to ten dollars per head might be realized. "But," said the farmer, "if you would like stock-raising, why don't you go to the Medicine Lodge country, where cattle are fattened on the native grasses without money and without price, being shipped to market like corn-fed stock?"

Later, I answered the question by going there. The idea of cattle on an open range, wandering at their own sweet will, or nearly so, had never entered the almost untutored mind of a youngster born and brought up among the hills of old Chenango county, New York. But finally I persuaded my orthodox parents that, outside of law, preaching or medicine, there was a field to which I might aspire, and that field a cattle-range.

Feeling a little timid about going alone into an untried wilderness, a cousin was easily persuaded to link his fortune with mine, and early in April, '78, we set sail from Binghamton, with many good wishes, a heap of useless luggage and two setter dogs. We did not think of dogs as requisite in the cattle business, but for hunting purposes they seemed to us as absolute necessities.

A few words about those two setters. They were sold to us at a high figure and would have been dear as a gift. One was yellow and white, the other black and white. One never pointed at all, the other pointed by sight and always at sparrows, that is, until he went West. The yellow and white setter was stolen from a gentleman in Philadelphia, and we were partakers in the theft. The black and white one ought to have been stolen right after we bought him; it would have been good money to us, but luck did not perch on our banner quite that soon.

Kodaks were not in use at that time, but a snap shot as we boarded the train at B., with our two dogs and some other paraphernalia not used in the cattle business, would have produced a picture that certainly must have sold readily at ten cents a copy, or thereabouts.

To begin properly and economically, we went as emigrants. Looking back upon it now, we can easily see the feasibility of it. We wanted to ride in the baggage car with our two dogs, but were not permitted that bliss. The value we placed on them was so far beyond their cost that we actually felt sorry for their former owners who had received so little for them. Before we finally parted with them their value had waned, and it occurred to us that originally the stock had never been at par. Our third-class tickets enabled us to remain up nights, so we could tap our lunch-basket for man and beast at irregular hours. An eating-house or dining-car never caught us on the journey; yet we reached our destination without suffering any of the pangs of hunger, dogs ditto. As we think of it now, when taking them out for air and exercise at different stations we must have presented a comical appearance. A setter dog, unless ill, is perfectly irrepressible. When we jumped them by their chains from the car, they immediately proceeded to lead us. We thought to guide and direct their exercise, etc., but they handled the ribbons themselves. It made other people laugh; we didn't. We can laugh now, however, and the dogs, why, they are dead.

As we think of those days, of our shaggy pets, of our dozens and dozens of rough and smooth coated friends who have only gone on a little while before, we find ourselves wondering why the Lord did not construct them on the same generous plan as he made the elephant, viz., to live a hundred years. To have loved and lost a good dog is an earthly punishment not exceeded outside of a personal loss.

I call not only on sportsmen, God bless them, but on every owner of an intelligent canine—and who owns one that isn't—to bear me witness to the truth of the above statement.

The journey as emigrants was a success. In fact, it was one continual round of pleasure, and when we reached Wichita, the terminus of our journey by rail, a few miles further would not have seriously inconvenienced us, except that our lunch-basket was getting low.

When we rolled into the above-mentioned city (all towns in Kansas are cities), we took up quarters at the famous hostelry, the Occidental Hotel. Ourselves and dogs were made at home at once. They were chained to an iron ring around the stove, happy while we were in sight and despondent while we sought refreshments. A pensioned darky found comfortable quarters for them, so we at once proceeded to make acquaintances and tell them we had come West to go into the cattle business. "Tenderfoot" was not openly applied to us in our presence, but it was in the air.

The grand air of Kansas was acting on us so that we did not notice any little amusing discrepancies in our actions. While chaining the dogs in the Occidental, a traveling man noticed us and from where we registered. Our innocent simplicity, our willingness to make friends, our boyishness, our just-out-of-school appearance and our general get-up were a source of much amusement to him. Coming into that section frequently, he followed us for many years in our goings and doings, and has often told me since, what a source of amusement our first appearance was to him. He must have been amused in a similar manner many times, for he is still on the road, and has been for well-nigh forty years, always with the same firm. As soon as the "Travelers' Home," at Binghamton, is completed, the manager should send a *menu* card to Port Smith, saying: "Come on, old boy; the latch-string is out."

Eager for advice, wholly taken up with our own schemes, we unloaded our plans on willing ears. A large volume could easily have been filled with the warnings and admonitions we received. We were advised to consult with "Buffalo Bill," the true one, William Matthewson—the man who in the sixties had a trading-post at the great bend of the Arkansas; the man who sold supplies to caravans of Western movers, killing buffalo by dozens to give them meat on their long and tedious journey. Mr. Matthewson, for he has since been a bank president, killed hundreds of buffalo while Colonel Cody was yet a kid; and earned the title fairly before the showman handled a gun. There are people yet alive in Wichita and the Indian Territory who can vouch for the accuracy of my statement.

Not far behind in numbers of animals killed is a brother-in-law of Mr. Matthewson, by name of Mead, who, on one occasion, is said to have taken his stand on ground now in the city limits of Wichita, and killed more than one hundred buffaloes from the moving herd in a single day. We did not see him do it, but we believe it just the same, as we believe there are chamois in the Alps.

CHAPTER II.

WE remained in Wichita several weeks, getting our bearings as it were; meantime Mr. Matthewson hooked up his mules and drove us over into what is called "Walnut Valley," named for a stream, a distance of twenty-five or thirty miles east of Wichita.

What a revelation it was! Such fields of wheat, so many peach-trees loaded with fruit, such hedges of Osage orange, such beautiful farms and such a general air of prosperity we never saw before in a farming community. The sun seemed never to hide his head, and although only the first of May the weather seemed like July, but a good strong breeze kept people from suffering with the heat. We were informed that cases of sunstroke rarely ever occurred; but we were informed of so many things during our short sojourn in Wichita, that we seemed in a week's time to have lived a whole year.

What a jolly lot of people they were! How enthusiastic over their country and their different lines of business! How anxious they seemed to be to try to impress us in any and every way! They all claimed to know considerable about cattle on the range; and as for sheep, why, they knew all about them. We soon discovered that Wichita was still quite a distance from regular ranch life on the plains.

Having cattle ever in view and not jumping hurriedly into any schemes to build new towns or get into business in old ones, we secured Mr. Matthewson's services, together with his mule team, and stocking it up with a small amount of supplies, including blankets in case of nights out, we started for Medicine Lodge. The distance to be traveled was between ninety and a hundred miles in a southwesterly direction.

After leaving Wichita, fifteen to twenty miles, we struck the old trail, where we were practically outside of civilization and out of sight of dwellings. We were crossing sandy streams and driving over a rolling prairie of buffalo grass, as far as the eye could reach, the monotony varied occasionally by the sight of a jack-rabbit, a coyote or an antelope. Before getting outside of the farming community, we saw dozens of quail and chickens, and our dogs that had never scented but little game in their lives were so overcome by the amount of it on all sides, that they went perfectly crazy and remained so for the balance of their days.

On a piece of plowed ground by the roadside we chased up a jack-rabbit, and as he cantered easily away I opened on him with shot, breaking one of his hind legs. He ran a little way, and stopped. The dogs took after him, and were allowed to get within about ten feet of him; then he turned around, seemed to smile, laid his ears back and left those dogs to ruminate upon some of the peculiarities of rabbits in general and jack-rabbits in particular.

Our trip, varied and interspersed with reminiscences by Matthewson, was a most delightful one. At various places he pointed out where the buffalo had been very plentiful and he had made a big killing. Thus to our wide open visages and wider open minds the day, and three-fourths of the trip to the Medicine, passed all too quickly. What a delight it all was, a vast panorama of interchangeable green, sunlight on a rolling prairie of buffalo grass, and a natural road not excelled anywhere. For miles and miles our mules never broke a trot, the dogs never broke a gallop, and Bill never broke the thread of his conversation. To young men not many years from Mayne Reid's delightful stories, it was simply bliss. In our rapt admiration of Bill, we forgot the aim and end of our journey, and if people ever reach perfect happiness any nearer than we did, their capacity for enjoyment beats the human frames—as they average.

Almost the first genuine ranch with cattle and horses we ever saw was one on the beautiful Chicaskia, named for its owner and proprietor, "The Mart Updegraff Ranch." The location was superb, especially for summer grazing. It was situated on one of the best-known streams in Southern Kansas, in a wide open valley rising into modest-sized hills. It could not have been used for a winter range as summer grass abounded; but the proprietor could, and did, put by a deal of hay, and made his place a sort of roadside inn, furnishing food and shelter for man and beast at a fair compensation. The place was about twenty miles from Medicine Lodge, and a big day's drive from Wichita, something over seventy miles. Such distances were mere bagatelles to Western men and their hardy cow-ponies or mules.

To my cousin, George C., and myself the long-distance drives were a source of never-failing wonder. Journeys always come to an end and so did ours. We drove into Medicine Lodge the next day, and found it to be a place of about twenty-five buildings. We drove to a rude hotel made of logs, and run by old man Updegraff, a "Pennsylvania Dutchman," and father of the ranchman on the Chicaskia. The cordiality of our reception was not strained, neither could it be doubted.

In a note made at the time, I notice considerable enthusiasm, and it reads as follows:

"Medicine Lodge, Kansas. So called from the fact that once in each year a number of tribes, the Pawnees, the Nez Percés, the Osages, Kiowas, Comanches, Cheyennes, Arapahoes, and some others, were in the habit of gathering there and making medicine." I suppose that the final outcome of making medicine in those days was in reality nothing more or less than plotting against the whites. That is where Buffalo Bill was called on to assist the Government in a pipe-smoke with the red men. There is where the celebrated Stanley did his earliest reporting work for a St. Louis paper, undoubtedly imbibing there his first love for the wild-woods that afterwards gave him such impressions and ideas as to cause him to rove in the wilds of Africa, and from such an humble start to astonish the world and make his everlasting fame.

Had Mark Twain stopped in that neighborhood, or half-way across the continent, he could have given us an entertaining work on that section of country, and saved "Roughing It" for still another volume.

But to return to Medicine Lodge. "It is a country of timber, creeks and cañons; in fact, the winter-grazing country of Kansas and nearly one hundred miles from anywhere, or Wichita." I go somewhat into details and say, "We are stopping at a log hotel, have pork for breakfast, dinner and supper, and the wind blows right through the house anywhere and everywhere. This is the greatest country I ever saw," a fairly strong statement, "and we are taking it in gradually. In Buffalo Bill we have the best man in Kansas to be with us." Bill had surely made a double mash. "He has two farms near Wichita, which are reported worth more than fifty thousand dollars." Afterwards the one adjoining Wichita on the east did parcel out and sell for more than one hundred thousand dollars. "He hasn't much ready money, but his expectations, like ours, are simply stupendous. Without inquiry we learned of Bill's honesty, and on that account and others we slept well."

Of course, we were young and considerably fatigued as night approached. Our nerves had never experienced to any appreciable extent the stimulating effect of whisky, tobacco or other similar articles in common to the race; we were not even tea and coffee fiends; of course, we could sleep! But I wander.

"I find it is Sunday, and we are going to church to hear a preacher who reaches Medicine once in two weeks. We very much hope to locate within five or ten miles of the city, so we can then enjoy many of the privileges of busy life." It is evident that the dust of civilization had by no means been shaken from our feet. "It is the great country for wintering cattle, on account of the fine grass, the protection from storms, as shown by the large number of cañons, pockets in the hills and springs of pure water." We learned of those advantages right away; the residents told us, and they also mentioned others.

"Among other things that take our eye and give this section a great send-off, I mention the large quantity of game on all sides—antelope, chickens and quail. We are told of deer and turkey, while not more than twenty-five miles away are some buffalo."

"We camped out three nights and gazed complacently at the stars, not for any lengthy period, however, as sleep had the right of way, managing our frames as well on the prairie as in bed." A little later a bed under a protecting roof could have been readily exchanged for our few belongings.

"This is considered the healthiest country in the United States; the inhabitants who have no other place to go, so consider it. George and I are brown as berries; and how we do eat! The pork is a stranger to us no longer. They get mail at this point three times a week." That seemed quite often to us. "The people here treat us pleasantly and seem as smart as other people, although they carry their lives in their hands, which they can readily do, as they have not much else to carry. We are rapidly forming the acquaintance of rattlesnakes, tarantulas and centipedes, but we don't frighten very much." The effervescent youths of America are among the bravest on earth, and we evidently belonged to that class.

"While sitting in the office of the hotel, we are in the midst of cattlemen and cowboys with big revolvers hung at their sides, and they all talk rather loud, or so it seems to us. The office comprises the general sitting-room, wash-room and dining-room all in one. The kitchen is a small log affair, and they don't cook much in it but Arbuckle coffee, pork and heavy bread. The human stomach shortly adapts itself to almost any situation, ours being no exception to the rule. We have about decided to locate in this section. Such a lovely country, with vast stretches of undulating prairie, great high bluffs, deep cañons, beautiful clear running streams, fringed with timber, and a sprinkling of cattle and horses on all sides. Many of the highest points are lined and seamed with a soft white rock called gypsum, which in the sunlight only serves to add lustre to the green tints on every hand. Mr. Matthewson is on his own stamping ground. He meets old plains' comrades on all sides. We listen to hunting stories, hair-breadth escapes from animals and Indians, until the books we have read on such subjects fade from our minds.

"We are enchanted. We are in a foreign land, with a halo of romance around us that makes the hitherto calm life we have led seem tasteless, insipid and of no account."

It could only have seemed so, because a quiet life is spoken of as the acme of bliss by some Eastern writers and others who have rarely, if ever, been outside their own county and never in another State. We read an article a few days since, which was loud in its praise of a man who had resided continuously in one locality for about ninety years, and had never done much of anything but fear God and remain in the same county. If to heel and toe the same little narrow pathway for a long lifetime is deserving of praise, then our ideas of progressive manhood, of a great and progressive nation, are all at fault.

On our return trip to Wichita, Bill was at his very best, pointing out where he had met Indians in fierce encounter, where he had slaughtered buffalo and elk innumerable, and decoyed the wary antelope with ease to its death. His fund of conversation seemed inexhaustible, and told in his quaint, quiet way, helped to while away the time, some of which might have been monotonous—even the beauty of boundless prairies palling at times. Some of these times will be mentioned in this work later on.

Occasionally an antelope appeared away off on some divide, but never very near. We had our mouths all shaped for antelope steak, and should have had some, only Bill had some poor cartridges which would not go off. We saw him try the curiosity dodge on some antelope, which was a perfect success, only the gun refused to go. By means of a red bandana handkerchief he lured a couple of them from a distance of about five hundred yards to within seventy-five yards; then pulling the trigger, and the gun refusing to go, he gave up in disgust. So our visions of juicy steaks faded away.

Our drive back to Wichita took a little longer and seemed quite a bit longer, being naturally less full of interest than the outward trip. But we were still full of enthusiasm; and with plans almost matured as to how and what we were to do about starting in the cattle business, we rolled into Wichita, advised to keep our plans locked in our own breasts.

CHAPTER III.

"WE found that to be the most polite country of our experience, for every man considered himself a gentleman, and was bound that others should so consider him, even if he had to enforce it with a Colt's 'Navy.' It was a simple matter to get along peaceably by attending strictly to one's own business, but if disposed to fight or mix in others' affairs, accommodation could be had with very little effort. We were informed by the knowing ones that, in order to hold stock on the range without care and feeding, we must get a location in the Medicine country, or one quite similar; and it seems necessary to get a holding or claim on a creek, where one can have a right of way to water, also an opportunity for the cattle to get back into the foot-hills and cañons."

That seemed to be the general opinion, so we tried to fall into line. "We were supposed to regularly take a government claim of one hundred and sixty acres, file on it, plow a few acres, build some sort of a cabin or dug-out in which to live, and regularly locate. Besides all of which, unless we should buy out some one's holding, we seemed to need a consent, or implied consent, of our neighbors. We made a selection before returning to Wichita for necessary articles and for final preparations." The sequel proved our selection a poor one.

"We were now in Wichita and, under the guidance of Bill, had put on an air of extreme reserve and silence, and he was to superintend the buying. Right away we must have a team, wagon, harness, plow, some window sash, doors, shingles and a few provisions. We should not buy cattle until fall, as we should get a better opportunity then, to select from a larger number of herds which would have reached Kansas from Texas on the trail, and after frost we could drive where we wished without danger of communicating Texas fever to other people's cattle."

All that we learned and some few things beside. Our first purchase was a gray horse, said to be worth one hundred dollars. He was put up at auction and Bill bid him off for us at forty-six dollars; later we learned that this was a round figure for "Old Whity," as we dubbed him. We bought a second-hand lumber wagon for forty-eight dollars, only two months in use, original price one hundred dollars. Our start was auspicious; we were rapidly buying ourselves rich. We were looking for a match for Whity, a combination of work-horse and saddle-horse, as a starter, for we were told that ordinary cow-ponies wouldn't do; but later we adored them. We found that we could buy a good set of harness, two saddles and bridles for fifty-six dollars, that being much below our expectations.

About that time a man was taken down with small-pox in the hotel where we were stopping, only two rooms away, so we were naturally quarantined. We couldn't go to any other hotel, so we were waiting patiently to see whether we were coming down with the complaint or not. We didn't seem to be as much afraid of the disease as we were that it would disfigure us, and spoil all our chances with our waiting sweethearts in the East. Yet how could we look worse than we did then? Our noses were red and peeling off; our cheeks were flaming and beginning to peel, too; but by the time they would see us again, we should probably look much better.

We bought a handsome sorrel horse for sixty dollars, so really had quite a respectable team, and soon had an opportunity of testing them. At that time a number of small-pox cases appeared, which necessitated a pest-house over on an island in the Arkansas River. We were advised to wait some days and not get too far away, in case we had been really exposed, which advice we followed.

Among others removed to the island was a man of our acquaintance, who was and is quite a character. His name is Mr. Fritz Snitzler, and he weighed at that time almost four hundred pounds. He pleaded with the doctor for his beer and it was allowed, for they sent him a keg a day. He recovered in due time, and I afterwards had him for a partner in many a game of whist. It caused a smile always, when he brought his huge hand down on the table with a thud, an ace in it to take the trick, and accompanied this with his favorite remark: "The longest pole knocks the persimmons."

In order better to pass the time, and receive some benefit, too, George and I decided to drive down into the Indian Territory, some sixty miles south, and take a look at a herd of thorough Texas cattle. We took our own team, with Bill as guide and coachman. We drove nearly south from Wichita, passed through Wellington, county seat of Sumner county, going on down to Caldwell, a small frontier town within a mile of the Indian Territory line. Wherever the land was farmed the golden wheat was a sight to behold. We went south from Caldwell, into the Territory, about ten miles, before meeting a herd of cattle. The rain had been falling in torrents for two or three days and the small streams were bankful. It was our first experience with the water over into the wagon bed, but Bill was equal to the emergency, plunging boldly into the stream and taking the team out all right.

We found a bunch of thirteen hundred and fifty head of beeves, but they were scattered for about four miles. The proprietor hadn't seen them all for sixteen hours, but did not seem to worry any. I jumped on a Texas pony and took a ride among the cattle, being so taken with them that I wanted to buy some right away; but we were not ready to embark in the business just then.

We ate dinner with the cowboys, having fresh beef, bread and muddy water—the camp was just out of coffee. But everything tasted good, and the hospitality was appreciated. That was our first view of Texas cattle and summer herding. It was not our last by any means.

Bidding good-bye to the boys and their very open camp, we struck back for Wichita. As we stopped in the small town of Caldwell, we little dreamed of its future growth; that it would take the mantle from Dodge City; that it would be the headquarters of a great cattle organization; or that it would be my future home for some years.

In journeying over the prairies we met a large number of people in their lumber wagons with canvas tops, called "prairie schooners," with the queerest loads and most amusing outfits, all seeking claims and homes, moving West, putting up with hardships and inconveniences that would drive gypsies out of business. We camped at night, feeding our horses some grain, and then would lariat them out with a thirty-five or forty-foot picket-rope, which gave them plenty of land for a night's grazing. After attending to the animals, we lighted our little camp-fire of corn-cobs, which we had brought along, cooked our coffee and bacon, ate our frugal meal, lighted our pipes for a smoke, chatted for an hour or so, then rolled up in our blankets and quickly fell asleep. That camping business was not altogether bad in fine weather, but when it was rainy and disagreeable, it was simply horrid. Such times made one think of, and long for, his old home, while the inducements to remain amid such surroundings certainly had to be golden.

Perhaps "misery loves company," or more likely "there is strength in numbers"; no matter what the reason, we took a young man in with us, Fred T——, a Yale College man, whose home was in Connecticut, and who, like ourselves, was anxious to handle stock. We easily arrived at an understanding, the business preliminaries being very moderate, very few and quite satisfactory to all parties; they nearly always are when both sides are young, enthusiastic, anxious and ready to agree upon almost everything.

Having satisfied ourselves we were in no danger of coming down with small-pox, we made final arrangements to pull out with our load for Medicine Lodge. And it was a load, too! By the time we purchased all of the articles recommended we had not less than twenty-five hundred pounds, and there were four of us. An ex-traveling man, almost used up with liquor, with no money, nothing to eat and but one suit of clothes, so worked on our sympathies by promising reform, saying he would cook for us and do anything if we would only take him, that we consented. The number filled our small "A" tent, and compelled us to take turns walking, in order to lighten our load. With pleasant leave-taking of our Wichita friends, and in jubilant spirits, we pulled out late one afternoon, our horses' noses pointing due west. By night we had made six miles to Cowskin Creek, and, going into camp, realized that we were fairly launched on an unknown career.

Nothing dampened our ardor while we toiled with obstacles on that four days' journey to the Medicine River, before unknown to us. Our wagon and load proved too heavy for our team, so that a number of times, in crossing sandy creeks and at short, sharp pulls, we were obliged to unload nearly everything. Up to that period it was the hardest journey of our lives, but we duplicated it afterwards many a time.

We were a happy quartette when we reached Medicine Lodge, for we flattered ourselves that the worst was over; but not so, as we soon had a new experience which made us realize that our troubles had only begun.

CHAPTER IV.

From Medicine Lodge we took a surveyor out six miles with us on Cedar Creek, to help us run the lines of the claim we were intending to take. It is evident that the surveyor wanted to do business, whether he was doing it right or not.

As we reached the part of the creek where we intended putting up our house, we were confronted by two men who ordered us off; but acting on the advice of the surveyor, we ordered them off. They went, but did not stay away long. After running a few imaginary lines, the surveyor rode away for the Lodge, and, so far as we knew, the lines were all right. We paid him double price for his labor, congratulating ourselves that we had the world by the horns, and a down-hill pull with no brake. How rudely our blissful dreams were shattered, and as it afterwards proved, all for the best!

I must mention the character of the water in that clear, running stream on which we were camped, and where we anticipated making our fortunes. That stream rose back in the divide, in among the gypsum hills, and it was what was known as "gyp water" of the first class. Without first breaking it, one could no more cook beans in it than one could cook a rock, the beans only growing harder and harder until they reached a state of petrifaction. For medicinal purposes, in some directions, it could give Saratoga waters cards and spades and beat them to a finish. It came hard to take at first, but we took it, for we had to, it being a "ground-hog" case. We were assured that a continued use of it for ten days would cause us to fret without it, but never tried it for that length of time and willingly gave it up to others.

After our surveyor's departure we had that much described feeling that we were "monarchs of all we survey"; in a few hours that feeling vanished, never to return. A supper was prepared; then with a heap of big talk and an equal amount of smoke, we whiled away the evening. With no tent up, we curled up in our blankets, feet to the fire, and went to sleep, to waken again in the gray of the morning, startled from our slumbers, to gaze upon six heavily armed horsemen. As we arose to a half-recumbent posture, our blankets partly thrown back, our only half-opened eyes took in the situation. Partly appreciating it, yet too sleepy to be much frightened, I said, "Good morning, gentlemen"; then, with a halt of silence while my wits were gathering themselves, I said, "Get down off your horses and stay to breakfast."

They silently accepted. We arose, stretched, yawned and prepared for breakfast. The strangers, for they were all strangers to us but two, busied themselves quietly picketing their horses, and all went to the creek for a wash. Gyp water and soap did not mix well, but we used it just the same, and without comment. Some one proposed clearing the cobwebs from our throats with a little red liquor, and all agreed in the same quiet manner. Meantime, the bacon was merrily frying, the watched coffee-pot beginning to boil, and the tongues were beginning to loosen perceptibly. By that time we had discovered our displaced acquaintances of the night before, and all along the line the conversation became general. At the time of our awakening, I believe we were four about as frightened men as this age often sees. Even our two-hundred-and-twenty-five-pound cook, Bills for short, trembled, and he hadn't a bit of interest in the affair, except of course if we were guilty, he was *particeps criminis*. It was a calm I never care to experience again, but the strain was quickly over. Something to drink and eat soon oiled the tongues, and mutual explanations followed. We right away discovered that we did not want to jump any one's claim, and they did not want us to. Under those circumstances an agreement was soon reached. The poor surveyor was the target. "The absent are always wrong."

Those extra men belonged to some sort of a Protective Association, and without judge or jury didn't allow any claim-jumping. Explanations being satisfactory all round, the offended ones became our friends, immediately offering to hook up with us, help pull us over the divide, show us claims farther away not taken, and others with some improvements, that we could buy at a fair figure. Thus happily ended an affair that looked blue, and which in the end proved an excellent thing for us.

It was very little trouble for us to up and away. Two of our new-made acquaintances went with us as they had offered, and we bade adieu to the rest, pulling slowly away over the divide. As we reached the top of the gypsum hills, hundreds and hundreds of feet above the Medicine Valley, a panorama was spread out before us not often excelled. Three or four streams fringed with timber were in the distance, a broken country everywhere green with buffalo grass, with cattle and horses grazing in many directions. Up to that time no such view had ever presented itself to our eyes. It was perfectly indescribable, so I will omit a description. Meantime, the day wore slowly on; our patient, plodding horses realized that time and distance were passing, even if we did not.

There were places over that divide where there was just room enough for a wagon-road, while a person mounted could go through by short-cuts and keep his direction without varying. We had the one wagon-trail by which to go. Towards night our weary team and weary selves pulled down into a beautiful grove of timber, on a spring branch of clear water at the fountain head of a stream known as Sand Creek middle prong. We had already crossed three Sand Creeks from Wichita, but we were in no humor to dispute the name. We refreshed ourselves from an enormous spring of clear, cool water, and remarked with glee, "No gypsum about that."

We were, indeed, in a section of country made up of buffalo-grass range and sand-hills; nothing but pure, clear water could come out of such land as that, at least nothing did. We were thirty miles from Medicine Lodge, six miles from the Indian Territory, and fourteen from our post office. Near us were three Sand Creeks; about ten miles distant was the Medicine River, while not many miles away were two streams bearing the euphonious names of "Big Mule" and "Little Mule." Bear Creek was close by, and about twenty miles away was the Salt Fork, a tributary of the Cimarron. Our tent was stretched in the grove not far from the cotton-wood ranch house belonging to the ranch which we had bought. We agreed not to take possession of the house for a month, and our small tent was very inconvenient for any sort of a regular residence; but we were learning to put up with all sorts of inconveniences without a murmur.

In our eagerness to secure a good range privilege, and our happiness at being in a fine grove of timber, with a spring of pure water, we eagerly jumped at the owner's price of five hundred dollars. The claim, cotton-wood house, corral and all, would have been dear at half the money, and by older persons with less enthusiasm, could have been bought for it, as the man and his family were heartily sick of the country. We did not know that, however, and could hardly believe that any one could sicken of such a glorious land.

All these days we were seeing plenty of prairie chickens, quail and other game, but as it was out of season, we saved it for future reference. We worked faithfully for an antelope, but so far, without success. I was obliged to go to Medicine Lodge on a few matters of business, and starting early, should have reached there by noon. I went on horseback, lost my way by taking the wrong divide, and traveled sixty miles before reaching my destination. Returning, it was even worse; I was two days reaching camp, and must have put in over a hundred miles.

Neighbors were scarce, but I accidentally ran on to some, and they kindly helped me along. During those early summer days we were busy with our garden and building a couple of dug-outs, one down below a few miles, on our own creek, and the other one on another creek, to take in a little more territory. At that time we considered our range a dozen miles long by half a dozen wide, but the real size of it will never be known, as the only figure it ever cut was in our minds. We had a house but no cellar, so it occurred to us to dig and build a dug-out, immediately adjacent. It was dug out but never built, for we learned by experience that to dig and build a dug-out, one ought to dig into a side-hill, then cover with heavy logs, while the centre log overhead should have a prop to prevent a cave-in, as the roof being heavy and needing tons of earth, must have support to correspond. We never reached the supports; indeed, the dug-out in which to keep provisions was never finished. We used a horse to haul out the earth, and he, poor old Whity, seemed to say, "This will never amount to anything," and it never did.

In our boundless enthusiasm to do it all hurriedly, we represented youthful New York in the Southwest. No one called us down. The digging of that dug-out was rather amusing, as no one wanted to do less than his share apparently, but every one "soldiered" a bit when he flattered himself it could be done and not be observed. All were fooled, for each one saw through the manœuvres of the rest. The desire to get the best end of it, is early implanted in the human breast, and the nineteenth century doesn't take a back-seat in that respect.

The dug-out digging was concluded, and that was as far as it ever went. The arguments in favor of it fell flat before it was ever roofed. We built others, but not that one.

CHAPTER V.

OCCASIONALLY I found myself making notes at our table, which consisted of a stable-door propped up on sticks, with boxes for seats. It made a good dining-table, not quite equal to an extension one, but it answered our purpose very well. It was amusing, the way we managed in various matters. Our usual bill of fare, cooked out in the open air between two back-logs, was: for breakfast, fried bacon, fried mush or stewed potatoes, bread without butter, and coffee without cream or milk. At noon we had mush and molasses, sometimes milk, but that was rare, depending on whether the family at the house could spare us any. They seemed to live principally on the milk from their thoroughbreds, and very little else. At night we had the same as at breakfast, sometimes adding the luxury of canned corn.

I arose "at five o'clock in the morning," built a fire, and then assisted our fat friend, Bills, who was acting in the capacity of cook and seemed perfectly at home; all of which was not strange, as he was an old camper, having served in the army and spent months on the plains; so he was a Godsend to our comfort and happiness.

We anticipated living in a tent until October, although we might take possession of our house in a month's time.

Being loaded with information, we found that Dodge City was the place to buy range cattle; but while we might buy them any time after herds came up through the summer from Texas, we could not drive them off the main Texas trail until after frost, for fear of giving Texas fever, whatever that might be, to our neighbors' cattle. We had learned many things in our cow-land schooling already, and some of them, probably the bulk, we learned over later. We were ready to affirm that our ranch, with all its seeming conveniences, characteristics, and surroundings, was by far the best one for a hundred miles around, and with reason, for we hadn't seen the balance of them. The man we bought out seemed to be sick of his bargain; perhaps he was. I know he was tired of life, and the bargain may have had an influence on him.

One of the very best features of our location was abundance of water—for home consumption unequaled, and the cattle (when we should get them) would have no cause to complain. With everything so bright, there were always drawbacks. Besides missing all the privileges of life in the Eastern States, loss of everything in the shape of luxuries and comforts that Eastern people enjoy, we were badly pestered. We couldn't get rid of bugs, flies, and gnats; tried faithfully and failed. Endurance of many trials and frontier life are inseparable. The one goes with the other, and they are synonymous.

Our Connecticut partner, Fred T——, not seeing immediate returns, and thinking us a little slow, concluded to buy the fine stock of the party of whom we bought the ranch. Having been informed that high-grade stock went begging on account of danger from Texas fever, George and I preferred not to invest in them; so he sold us his third interest in the ranch property, and bought the thoroughbred cattle, taking them away from that section and locating a short distance north. He left us without prejudice either way, so far as we knew.

At that time we sent East for some reading matter and waterproof duck clothes. In many things the East is far ahead, even if it does seem a trifle slow to Western people. We had never seen as continuous warm weather in our lives, and if we had worn linen our laundry bill would have cut quite a figure, but we wore flannel and fortunately had a creek close by.

Among the acquaintances and friends engaged in the cattle business on the Medicine and Cedar Rivers, we met some young fellows who had heard of elk in our neighborhood. A hunt was proposed; they came, joined us, and we went. Result, no elk, but very many fresh elk-tracks, or lots of sign, as old hunters say. We worked faithfully, and found quite fresh tracks that were no doubt those of a band of seven elk, which had numbered eleven only the year before. A hunter's rifle and cowboy's six-shooter had decimated their ranks. We never had a shot at them, but learned a year later that they were, like the buffaloes, "a thing of the past."

In our hunt after the elk, we went into some very rough country, almost deserving the name of "bad lands." We found the sign all right and the tracks very fresh. They must have winded us at a distance and quietly slipped away. We found the tracks to be about the size of those made by a two-year-old heifer and quite similar. That was our first and last effort for elk in that locality.

We got our mail about once a week, each man going turn-about. The pleasure we took in receiving letters and papers, reminded Bills of old army times and he often remarked upon it. They were matters of great importance to us, those letters from home-friends being received with radiant countenances. At each arrival of mail I was sure to receive blue ones and also white ones in feminine handwriting. The white ones were from my mother; the blue ones were not, and they were by no means blue in their contents, always causing my face to be wreathed in smiles, and were the occasion of much guying from my companions, by all of which I pretended to be bored, but secretly I liked it. "Further deponent saith not."

We had purchased a milch cow, and she proved quite an addition to our establishment. Having had the care of cows while yet a young boy and being a fair milker, the cow fell to my lot. She wandered so far and I was so troubled to find her, that I was obliged to rope her forelegs together with hobbles, and even then she would manage to get a mile away from home. As we had to be around in the grass a great deal and were sleeping on the ground, we were much troubled by a small insect called chigger. From our knees down, the itching was intense and sometimes absolutely unbearable. Our only relief was in frequent application of salt fat bacon.

In the midst of all our worries and afflictions, we were ever cheerful, regular "Mark Tapleys," in fact. A letter now informed us that an old-time friend and schoolmate of George's and mine, Will W——, from our own county in New York, had arrived in Wichita and was waiting a good chance to come down. He was coming to cast in his lot with ours, and we were going to sell him the third interest bought from Fred T——, who, as we have before remarked, had gone into the fancy stock business, which we thought an unwise venture. Later he thought so too and sold out his thoroughbreds, making his fortune afterwards in straight Texas cattle. So the ball was kept rolling, the changes making very little real difference with us—the most pleasurable and exciting period of the week being the return of the one man who went the day's journey to Lake City, for the mail and other articles. We would rush at him with open arms and almost overpower him. He distributed hastily, and each one almost selfishly rushed off to some nook or corner, where, greedily and oblivious to everything else, we fairly devoured our news from home and friends. When we finally finished this most pleasant pastime or occupation, we turned to the articles brought from the store in town.

We compared with the list sent, praised a bit, found a little fault, and with a renewed supply of tobacco, lighted our pipes, and listened with great interest to the latest from civilization, as detailed by the one fresh from the city. Thus the days passed by, and they were all busy ones. The short evenings were occupied with cards played by the light of our lantern, or by a moderate amount of reading. Our tent didn't make a very good store-room, so with some things we used the adjacent trees, upon which we hung different articles.

All varieties of meat, both fresh and salt, must be hung out of reach of our own dogs, and particularly out of reach of a gaunt greyhound owned by our neighbor from whom we bought the ranch. One night a ham, only one-third used, hung about eight feet from the ground and seemed plenty high enough for safety, but we had forgotten about that hungry hound. In some way he leaped up, pulled down that ham, and ate nearly all of it. Ordinarily a very much smaller amount would have sufficed him, but having stolen it, he felt that he must do the subject justice, and refused food for two days after. We missed our ham, but it had to be charged to profit and loss. We hadn't charged much to profit as yet, except in our minds.

About that time we learned that a stockman doesn't care for very near neighbors. A rumor was current that a sheepman was moving in on us, so we armed and rode out to meet the enemy, but fortunately for him or for us, he had vacated and nothing came of it.

It was now time for the Fourth of July to put in an appearance. Not to be outdone in patriotism, two towns near us, Medicine Lodge and Sun City, made arrangements to celebrate, and we received cordial invitations to be present. Hearing rumors of their celebration day pleasures, and concluding they were either too enthusiastic or too swift for us, we decided to decline. Later we were informed we had missed a great day, and from different reports, whether true or not, were glad we had missed it. We were invited to a Fourth of July dinner by the family living in our house. We put on clean flannel shirts, silk handkerchiefs for neckties, shined up our shoes, took axe-handles for canes and marched to the house in great style. George C——, who had been to town, came home in time for the spread, and brought us a large bundle of reading matter, so our first Fourth in the Southwest passed very pleasantly.

CHAPTER VI

WE had been a trifle shy of reading matter, and when George brought us papers some weeks old the sight of them was so good that we felt raised from the depths of abject poverty to affluence. During the middle part of a number of warm days just passed, we had nothing about which to busy ourselves but reading advertisements and killing flies, both of which occupations pall after a few days.

We played rather a mean trick on the flies, and deprived them of considerable comfort. We procured some mosquito bar, and, driving some thousands out of the tent, put up our netting and effectually barred their further entrance. "Necessity" certainly "is the mother," or the father, or both, "of invention," as any one would think could they have seen our barber chair improvised from boxes and blankets. It was certainly a success, and, while not at all fancy, answered our purpose quite well.

Our rides to Medicine Lodge were very lonely—twenty-five miles over a divide, with the dimmest kind of a wagon-trail, and not a house in sight. An occasional prairie chicken, or an antelope once in a while, was all that relieved the monotony of the ride.

We went to a town called Lake City, fourteen miles away, for our mail and also for our groceries. It was a place of five buildings, and the man for whom it was named was sole monarch. Speaking of the smallness of the place, George rode into it on his first trip there, and seeing a man standing in front of one of the buildings, rode up to him and said, "Can you tell me where Lake City is, and where a man by the name of Lake lives?"

The man replied, "Yes, sir; I am Lake, and this is Lake City."

Mutual explanations followed, articles were purchased at the little store, and an acquaintance with us ranchers was begun, to end only when we moved permanently from that locality.

One day when all were absent from camp but George, he had a visitor for dinner and entertained one kind of an angel unawares. His visitor was the most celebrated horse thief on the border—Dutch Henry—who even then had a band of stolen horses on our creek, two or three miles below. He seemed extra well armed, George thought, and did not tarry long over his meal. Not until two or three hours later, when an officer and posse arrived in chase, did we know who had been our guest. He was not caught then, but met, a little later, the usual fate of such men, as I was informed.

We had a fair amount of early vegetables from our garden, and had the promise of wagonloads of melons, but the promise was all we ever got. Our duties were rather light now, and occasionally time hung heavy. Of course, we were eager for it to pass quickly and for fall to come, as we wanted to buy cattle and get started in dead earnest.

We had three real near-by neighbors, small holders of cattle, mostly well-bred stock. One was three miles distant, one six, and the other nine. We visited back and forth occasionally, but were never very thick. We were not sufficiently Westernized as yet, and besides, ours was a lively camp, usually well supplied with reading matter, and what more could we ask?

During those long summer days it was an effort to move, and almost an effort to talk—not quite. It was after the middle of July and very warm, but George and I thought we had better go up to Wichita to find out about our Eastern friend, whom we suspected was there and who was to join us in business. Then, too, we flattered ourselves that we could buy groceries cheaper and haul them to our ranch, thereby saving freight. Anyway Wichita was more of an attraction than we were willing to own. We had met so many pleasant people there in our other visits, that the memories were still with us, so we desired a repetition of those visits and memories.

Of course, we at once renewed our acquaintance with Mr. Matthewson, "Buffalo Bill," and he was the same genial man, undoubtedly anxious for our welfare. This was all true, because if he had no other interest it had become a matter of pride with him, and to wish us success was perfectly natural. Our eyes were gladdened by meeting our friend from the East. He would have come to us at the ranch, had not illness prevented, keeping him tied in Wichita. We took him around with us while we were renewing acquaintances, and had a very jolly time. No doubt we remained there three or four days longer than there was any call for, and it is quite probable that our supplies cost us more than at the "Lodge" or Lake City. But good times come to an end sooner than bad ones, and once more we set out for camp, reinforced with a new partner. The weather was intensely warm, the horses tired easily, so we had the usual amount of hard pulling, unloading and reloading, work and worry.

At the Chicaskia Ranch we met a smooth cowboy by name of Barney, it should have been Blarney, O'Connor, and he prevailed on us to buy a cow-pony for forty dollars. He assured us the animal must be nine or ten years old, and he was all of that and ten besides. He would have taken twenty-five dollars rather than not to have sold him, but we did not know that until later. While we paid too much for him, the pony afterwards did us a world of service and paid his way twice over. It is almost impossible to be robbed much on a cow-pony; they have good legs, good stomachs, and good wind as a rule. If they have no saddle sores, they are very apt to be all right, and age makes little difference with animals so tough naturally as they are. These cow-ponies are wonderfully sure-footed, keen of vision, and seem to watch for holes made by gophers, prairie dogs, and other animals, so that one seldom gets a fall, and few are the accidents, comparatively speaking.

The extreme hot weather and a rather active life, together with food far from rich, was rapidly taking off our surplus flesh, so that our cheek-bones were showing for the first time in some years. We managed to keep well, and that was the most essential thing.

The latter part of the journey to the ranch was made in the rain and mud, and our team became very much worn, so much so that I rode ahead on the gray pony and stopped teams at the different crossings, so that they doubled with us and pulled us through. The rain did not cool the air any, only causing humidity, a state of the atmosphere common in that section. Towards night of what we thought our last day on the road, the team came to a halt about five miles from camp and wouldn't budge another inch. We struck a dry camp. Not a drop of water for man or beast, and not a spring of water that we knew of, nearer than the ranch. The horses at once began to fill up on grass, apparently as contented as though by a running stream. For ourselves, we tried a little whiskey with a little weak vinegar on the side. It did not fill the bill, and as thirst-quencher did not prove a success. Cheese, crackers and bologna proved very dry eating, so we gladly took to our pipes. As the sun went down we rolled up in our blankets, going immediately to sleep. The buffalo grass made a fair mattress, and completely tired out, nothing disturbed our slumbers. We did not tell our friend that we were sleeping in a section of country where rattlesnakes and tarantulas abounded. He was certain of it next day, however, when we killed two snakes with ten rattles each.

The next morning before sun was up, we were hooked up and away, again winding over the divide. We reached the ranch in time for breakfast, and they had the laugh on us again for being caught out overnight. That little grove of timber, the great black walnut trees, the never-failing spring and stream, the story-and-a-half house, the tent in the grove, and the general air of comfort and quiet, made such an impression on our new partner that he was fairly radiant, and exclaimed, "Boys, you did not overstate it."

During the early part of the season we had taken quite an interest in our garden, and really farmed quite a bit. Some one told us that we ought to raise millet for some of our animals in winter, so we re-broke about ten acres of land, and such miserable plowing has not often been seen; but we sowed the millet, and it really came up, but that is all it ever did do. The soil was sandy, and it forgot to rain only just enough to make the wild grass good and keep the springs from drying up. A small part of the land was devoted to garden purposes, and we really raised a few, a very few, early vegetables. Soon they all dried up except our melons; they, liking sand and sun, had it here in abundance. They came on slowly but surely, and what delight we took in watching their growth! When our friend Will W—— came from the East we very soon took him up to feast his eyes on that melon patch. It was to him one of the pleasantest parts of the ranch, and he watched it with jealous care. We speculated as to how many we could put in our large cool spring at one time, and how long it would take for the water to cool them thoroughly. There must have been at least a hundred melons, many of them approaching that state of ripeness when they would do to pull.

At last we set a day for picking a half dozen of them, and the day before the time set one or more of us feasted our eyes on them, and oh! how good they did look. On the morning in question, Will and I betook ourselves up to the melon patch. What utter ruin and devastation met our eyes! The old cow, thoroughly hobbled, was at work on the last one, not a whole one being left of the entire number. Our hearts were broken, and with tears running down our cheeks, we exercised that old cow around there for a few minutes in a very lively manner, and she flew over the ground quite rapidly, considering she was hobbled. We sat down and cried just like two children, and debated whether to kill the cow or not. Finally we decided that she would die of cholera infantum or morbus anyway, and suffer sufficiently, so we let her go and took up our mournful march to the camp. As we approached the house, complaining and scolding, eyes red and swollen, the fat red face of our cook appeared in the doorway, with an expression of the greatest anxiety depicted on his open countenance, and he cried out in a loud voice, "What in h—l is the matter?"

With one voice we answered, "That old red devil of a cow has eaten every one of our melons," and then we boohooed again.

All lamented together without blaming any particular one, and a sadder camp for a day or two no one ever saw. We supposed, of course, the cow would die, and not one bit of doctoring did we propose to do, either; but the cow did not die, not she. Melons seemed to be her natural diet, and it did not make much difference whether they were ripe or not. In all our trials, vicissitudes, losses, anxieties and troubles, that was the only time we ever shed a tear while we were engaged in the cattle business.

About this time we were offered twice what we had paid for our ranch, whether *bona fide* or not, I never knew; and the man of whom we had bought seemed to want to get the property back again. Such little episodes added much to our happiness, not to say to our importance, even if we did not wish to make a sale.

CHAPTER VII.

At that time I was invited to become one of a party to go to Dodge City, look over the bunches of cattle there, get acquainted with the stockmen, and perhaps buy a few cow-ponies. It was estimated that there were over one hundred thousand through cattle from Texas held in the immediate vicinity of Dodge City, which at that time was the terminus of the great Texas cattle trail.

Our former partner, Fred. T——, Mr. F——, of whom we bought the ranch, Bills and I, made up the party. My two partners preferred to remain and look after matters at camp. We went provisioned for a ten days' trip, and expected to cover something over four hundred miles in a lumber wagon before our return. For the next week or so I should try the ground once more as a bed. We had been quite luxurious lately, sleeping on some home-made cots, which were really fully as comfortable as beds in the extremely warm weather through which we were passing.

We reached Dodge City after three days' hard driving, part of the way following the Texas trail; and for a mile on either side the grass was eaten so close it would have puzzled a sheep to get a meal. In order to get any for our horses, we drove a mile or more from the trail. We were mostly on the open prairie, and our meals were cooked at a fire made of buffalo-chips, so called. In dry weather such fuel would do for light house-keeping, but in damp weather it was different. On our trip we crossed many streams of water, drove over miles and miles of level and undulating buffalo-grassed prairies, a sight that our eyes had never before rested upon. We saw an immense number of antelope and our first drove of wild horses. In my enthusiasm such sights caused the cattle business to fade from my mind for the time being, and my sportsman's blood to thrill with pleasure. I can still recall my interest in the journey, and how on the afternoon of the third day, from the top of a high divide, we could see, ten miles or more away, the bright waters of the Arkansas, and close to its shore, Dodge City, showing up mostly in white.

We camped in the sand, close by the river, near two or three outfits bent on much the same errand as ourselves. It was Sunday, but an

Eastern person would never guess it in Dodge City. Everything was being conducted in the same noisy manner as on a week-day. All places of business were open, and drinking places were crowded with revelers. It was at that time the great Texas cattle market of this country, and probably as tough a place as any in the United States. It had a population of five to eight hundred, and during the season of the cattle drive a floating population of two or three thousand. The town was swarming with cowboys, half-breeds and Mexicans, who were there partly for a spree and to get rid of a few months' earnings in their seemingly favorite pastimes to be found in such towns. We saw a great deal in two or three days, and were amused at the attention paid us. We were supposed to be on hand prepared to buy cattle, and invitations to ride out to look at herds were numerous, and some of them we accepted.

By keeping constantly on the alert we learned many things, and that midsummer trip to Dodge gave us a great deal of valuable information that was of use later. We had a close call at a cowboy battle, and took refuge in a livery stable while the shooting went on. No one was killed, and only two were wounded; not much of a fight for Dodge. We saw numbers of women roaming around bareheaded, going in and out of saloons, shaking dice for the drinks, and mingling with the cowboys in an easy manner very novel to us. We seemed to be slighted. Our dress was different from the regulation cowboy costume, so we were passed by unnoticed. At first our pride was touched a trifle; later we didn't mind it.

Just at that particular time, the residents claimed, it was quite dull in Dodge; to us it was so lively that our brains fairly whirled. The strange costumes of the cowboys, the cattlemen, and the dresses of the women; the raised board-walks, the peculiar fronts of stores and saloons, and the large number of horsemen; the outfits preparing to set out, the grub wagons taking in supplies, the continual stream of humanity on the streets, both sexes, in and out of stores, restaurants and saloons, particularly the latter—was to us a source of never-failing interest and amusement. We could hardly bear to spend the time to go down on the sandy flat of the river to help our cook prepare our meals. Our share of the duties was to gather bushes for the fire and bring muddy water from the river. The water in most of the Western streams was inclined to be muddy, and the Arkansas was no exception to the rule. Our coffee, with a little condensed milk in it, was nearly the same color as the river water we used. We learned not to be particular.

The hotels in Dodge were reported so poor that we had a good excuse for camping in the sand. Candidly, I am inclined to think it was Hobson's choice. We were not perfectly well while in Dodge, and attributed it to the extreme heat; but I don't think it was altogether owing to the high mercury, although it was over a hundred every day; but undue excitement and other reasons may have entered in to cause our bad feelings.

We were earnestly followed by several cattlemen, who gave most excellent reasons why we should buy of them. Not being ready to purchase we steadily refused all propositions, and, having made our preparations to go home, turned our team southeast. We made up our minds to give a wild stallion a chase on the way back, and see if we could round him up. When we reached that part of the prairie where we saw the wild horses we stopped for noon, and, unharnessing the team, Mr. F—— and I saddled up and struck out. I was riding one of his animals, and he said to me, "Don't spare the horse, but give him the whip and spur; and don't forget to yell like a wild Indian."

I followed his directions, and, to use his own words when describing the scene, at home: "You ought to have seen Ben; he kept time with whip, spur and voice. Every jump his pony made he let out a yell that would have made a Cheyenne warrior jealous, and could have been heard a mile."

I supposed I was riding the faster horse, but Mr. F—— left me so far behind that I had to cut across to head him off. I discovered that we were not chasing a stallion at all, but a clean-limbed brown mare that was only playing with us, and I told Mr. F—— to let up, as he was winding the horse he rode and only wasting his time. On his own account it was time to stop, for the perspiration was running down his face and blood was almost streaming from his nostrils.

As we came to a halt and turned towards camp, Mr. F—— and I looked at each other sheepishly, as much as to say, "What a foolish race that was!" Silence spoke louder than words. Fred T—— and Bills laughed heartily at us, and we were joked for many a day. We might as well have gone on a jack-rabbit chase in a top buggy.

A few hours later we all rejoiced when I killed an antelope on the run at a distance of over two hundred yards. Many a one have I since killed, but never one that afforded me so much pleasure as that. The way Bills cut and slashed into that animal was a caution, and it wasn't five minutes until all four of us were at work on it and had blood on our arms clear up to our elbows. We had fried antelope for supper, and while pulling at our pipes before bed-time every feature of the shooting was gone over at least twenty times. I tried to be modest and rather indifferent, but my companions seemed not to notice it, and treated me with much consideration. I wanted to have the head mounted, but taxidermists were too far away, and so we tried to save all the meat possible. We had plenty of it when we reached camp, besides lots of fresh news, and of course hours were spent in a confab which would have put to blush an old-fashioned tea party, and compared favorably with a hen-party of the present time.

We were now certainly supplied with meat, as the day after our return from Dodge I killed five wild turkeys and was loth to stop then. We liked the meat of young turkeys very much, and took occasion to remark that if it were prepared for eating at a first-class restaurant it would certainly bring a fancy price.

It seemed to be a common opinion in Barber County that salt was necessary for cattle, and to buy and haul from the railroad was not to be thought of, with the salt plains only fifty miles away. A load of salt we must have, and George C—— joined a neighbor for the trip. In a few days he returned with a load of fifteen hundred pounds of very good-looking salt. It would hardly do for the table, but would answer very well for cattle. The sequel proved that the cattle did not care for it, and probably did not need it, owing doubtless to more or less alkali in the soil on all sides. The salt was in a deposit by the side of a creek, and averaged an inch in thickness. It was not difficult to load a wagon with it, but getting the load to the ranch was another matter.

It was a very rough country, and George could never have gotten back alone with his load. He brought home some fresh buffalo meat which he bought of some hunters, and we enjoyed it amazingly. We had a little more on two or three occasions, and then it was a thing of the past.

The latter part of August, Mr. F—— and family vacated our cottonwood house and we took possession. It was not elegant, but we scrubbed and cleaned just as if it had been. We used over two hundred pails of water, and worked away at it all day long, singing, whistling, joking, and having a jolly time generally.

Our house consisted of two rooms, one up-stairs and one below. Furniture was scarce, consisting of a stove, cupboard, table, cots, and cracker-boxes for chairs, a lamp and a lantern. Our room on the first floor was parlor, sitting-room, dining-room and bed-room for two, with more or less room for guests, depending on the number.

We were so delighted with our new quarters that we sang and danced but did not disturb any neighbors. We cleaned up our yard, and did not throw any of the rubbish into our neighbor's yard either. In the evening we celebrated with a grand bonfire, and as the flames lighted up those great walnut trees, throwing their lurid glare into the heavens above, we smoked our pipes in peace, and remarked that if our friends at home could take a peep at us, what a jolly time it would be.

CHAPTER VIII.

UPON the advice of some of our new-made friends we hired a man accustomed to cattle on the range, expecting he would prove of great service to us and be in reality a sort of teacher besides. We busied ourselves rebuilding our corral, fixing over our stable, and getting everything in order for winter. Before starting for Dodge to buy cattle, we had hay to put up, wood to cut, grain and provisions to look after, besides very many other things to attend to, all of which kept us from passing idle hours.

In August we experienced one of the severest thunder-storms of our lives, and were inclined to worry considerably, rather to the amusement of our newly employed herder, John C——. He informed us that we might expect to be out with the herd in many a storm as severe as that one and in some worse ones. We all began to groan, take on, and inquire how soon the next train would start for New York, and other similar questions. Joking soon put us in good humor, so our fears flew away. The timidity of hustling youth is usually short-lived; nevertheless a full-fledged Kansas storm with all the accompaniments was terror-striking to young men from the East. Possibly the others may have gotten used to them in time; I never did.

We killed quite a number of young turkeys at different times, and they added much to our larder, but now they were getting rather too shy for us, so we were satisfied that the report of the gun, together with the advice of the old birds, had taught them some wisdom. When young they are foolish, but as they arrive at maturity, shyer game it would be difficult to find. A wild turkey on his native heath is the grandest, handsomest game-bird in America, being worth something after one gets him. He is a native of this country, and was here with the Indians, probably before. He does not live on the West Coast, but is frequently found in New Mexico and Arizona. When full-grown he is a strong flyer, a splendid runner, and unless outwitted, a difficult bird to capture. But new calls, new varieties of strong-shooting guns, and the greed of the pot-hunter, which knows no law, have exterminated him in sections where he was formerly wont to roam.

One Saturday evening George killed a half dozen quail, and Sunday morning we thought they were hardly enough to go around, so calling the new pointer dog, Fannie, we started at work a few rods below the house. Taking my gun and following her closely a short distance, she came to a stand near some bushes. Thinking it must be a cotton-tail rabbit, I urged her forward with my knee, when with a tremendous spread of wing a large gobbler got up, not ten feet away. I was so shocked I fell over backward, so by the time I could rise and fire, the quail shot only cut out a circle of feathers, and the huge bird was gone. I was heartily laughed at for my pains, and I went to the house convinced that Sunday shooting was not quite the proper caper anyway. I solaced myself by making a custard for dinner, using eighteen eggs, three quarts of milk and other ingredients in proportion. There were five of us, and we were not expecting company either, but before night set in the custard was all eaten.

The mosquitoes were getting very troublesome, and pennyroyal was constantly in use. We must have air, so we left our doors and windows open; consequently the mosquitoes and some other visitors had full and free access.

One night a slight noise on the floor caused us to rise up in our cots and examine. A short examination was sufficient. We did not invite the intruder to remain; neither did we hint strongly for him to go. It was a polecat; he took his own time and exercised his own sweet will. His inspection of the premises lasted an unseemly long time, and we were delighted, breathing much freer, when he departed. No one got up to shut the door, but we were not troubled any more from that quarter.

Sunday at the ranch was the day for general cleaning and for letter-writing. It was ingrained in us not to work on Sunday, so we did as little manual labor as we possibly could, sometimes wishing that Sunday came oftener.

It was now about the middle of September, and we had completed, or nearly so, our arrangements to go to Dodge City, buy our first cattle, and fairly set sail in the stock business. Our man John by this time had nearly convinced us that he was the man for the position, so we had fully decided to conform to his opinion in the buying and handling of our to-be-purchased stock. His very firmness was convincing.

In his quiet way he said: "Boys, if you will let me have my own way and do just as I tell you, I'll make you some money, but if you try to run it yourselves, I'll quit you and you may get in trouble."

We proceeded regularly to obey and to do very nearly as John told us to. His earnestness at times was positively impressive. One of the poor whites of Georgia, a man with absolutely no education, for he could neither read nor write, yet such was his energy, his knowledge of stock, and his versatility in manual labor, that he inspired us with respect, soon having us quite under his control.

The preparations were finally concluded. We three partners with our man John, took our team and lumber-wagon stocked with provisions, leaving the ranch and belongings, together with a horse, in charge of our cook Bills. We were due to be back on our range with a small bunch of cattle soon after frost, which usually came somewhere from the middle to the latter part of October. Bills knew that our movements were somewhat uncertain, but we left plenty of reading matter, provisions, and tobacco, so he took it philosophically and said staying alone was a matter of the utmost indifference to him. Judging by the past, we knew he would have plenty of company, as travelers were numerous and every ranch was a hotel where guests were entertained free of charge.

A good-natured cook at a cow-camp was a rare article, as he was liable to cook a meal for one or more strangers at any hour of the day and until he retired for the night. It was not to be marveled at that cow-camp cooks were cross-grained.

We had made all arrangements to start for Dodge City, so bade good bye to Bills and to our dogs, Don, Fannie and her eleven pointer puppies. Poor Dash was dead of snake-bite; even whiskey did not save him.

We set out by way of Lake City, then up the Medicine River to Sun City, afterwards slightly northwest until we struck the cattle trail, which we followed to our destination. We made about thirty miles that day, and camped on a beautiful stream, called Soldier Creek. The next morning, bright and early, we were up and away, driving at an easy pace over a smooth road, when we met a man in a buggy coming about as fast as his horses could travel. He seemed greatly excited and asked what we were going in that direction for. We told him we were going to Dodge City to buy cattle. He then said in an excited manner: "Turn around and drive to Sun City as fast as you can; the Indians are on the war-path, killing people right and left."

He further said that he had been lecturing at one or two towns in that section, and away he went on the gallop. That settled it; we thought he was wild on the Indian question, but when he spoke of having delivered lectures in that part of the country we were satisfied he was an escaped lunatic. While we laughed and joked, apparently giving little heed to Indian rumors, I noticed the horses were kept at their best pace, for I never saw them make such time before or after.

Along in the afternoon we pulled in on Hackberry Creek, eighteen or twenty miles from Dodge, and proceeded leisurely to get a meal, calculating to hook up and pull slowly into town late in the evening. We noticed that the horses were reeking with perspiration, apparently very tired, but as they immediately began to crop the grass we thought three or four hours of it would give them a good filling and a good rest. The jack-rabbit was just beginning to stew and we were busy gathering buffalo-chips to replenish our fire, when a cowboy dashed up on a foam-flecked pony, saying: "For God's sake, what are you fellows doing here? Get into Dodge as soon as you can. The Indians are on the warpath killing all they meet." And away he went. The cowboy wasn't crazy; only excited, that's all. That rabbit was never cooked, at least not by us. We didn't make haste slowly, but in two minutes we were hooked up and away. In three or four miles the horses played out and refused to go faster than a walk. One man sat in a wagon and drove, while we walked and rode by turns the balance of the distance. When we saw the town a few miles away, a pressure was lifted from our minds.

We learned later that the Indians pulled in on Hackberry two or three hours after we left. When one lives to tell the story I have always noticed that the escape was made frightfully and thrillingly close. The town looked good and familiar. Our horses lived to get in, and the walk didn't hurt us a bit.

We went into camp in our usual place on the Arkansas River bottom. Tired as we were, the town had attractions for us. Everything was in an uproar. The cowboy had told of our apparent indifference to an Indian uprising, and we were greeted on all sides with joyful remarks, not to say a little joking. I took great pleasure in introducing my companions to numerous acquaintances and to Dodge in general.

Being the latest arrivals from the neighborhood where the Indians were known to be, we were plied with questions and invited to partake no end of times. As the evening passed on, our importance didn't wane until rather late, when two or three cowboys reported from the scene of action having some fair-sized stories to relate. Interest in us seeming to abate, we withdrew to our beds on the sand by the river. Some notes taken at the time read as follows:

"I wired relatives in the East that we were safe, thinking they might read in the papers of an Indian raid in our locality, and would naturally be frightened on our account. They hadn't heard anything about it, and my telegram did frighten them. Back came this message: 'What Indians, and what is the matter; hadn't you better come home?' That settled it. The Indian raid had scared and worried us some, and we were proud of it. Our seemingly close call had lost its effect; our halo of Indian romance was gone; we were brought down to the simple actions, labors, pleasures and joys of civilized life. Cold, cold that message seemed. In effect it was: 'Why, what of it, what is it?' And it wound up with the commonplace words, 'Come home.' Home is the best place on earth, in fact it is an excellent place to go to-probably on any and all occasions; but to be told to come there in the calm and dispassionate way of a telegram, with its unfamiliar handwriting, will hardly do on the range. We considered ourselves at home; we were almost. To say that we were disgusted won't do. We were mad through and through. The idea that our Eastern relatives didn't appreciate the danger we were encountering, or thought we were so weak that we needed home comfort and sympathy! Such ideas hurt our pride, put us on edge, made us think we were men, causing us actually to say: 'Oh, if they only understood the situation, how careful they would be about telling us to come home!'"

We entered into voluminous explanations in letters, and the troubled waters were calmed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE number of Northern Cheyenne Indians raiding through the country was guessed at, but no one put it lower than three hundred, which was wrong by at least one hundred and fifty. That was the first Indian trouble since '74, and would hardly have occurred then, had the Government by its agents not been so lax in furnishing stores and supplies. To an Indian that is a lawful excuse for an opportunity to plunder and kill.

The morning after our arrival in Dodge, a stockman by name of Tuttle was notified that his cook had been killed and some of his horses run off. This occurred some twenty-five or thirty miles below town. He called for recruits to help gather his horses and drive his cattle in near the river. Among those who responded were our herder, John Curry, myself, and sixteen others. I was much interested in a blacksmith who accompanied us. He weighed two hundred and forty pounds, his horse was seventeen hands high, and his gun weighed fifteen or sixteen pounds, shot one hundred and twenty grains of powder, and lead accordingly.

We all rather looked to him as a leader, and the cow-men allowed he could begin killing about a mile and a half distant, and was really a great addition to our party, armed and ammunitioned for a season's campaign. There was also another curiosity in the party, such a one as is almost always to be found on similar occasions, one of those broad-mouthed, supple-tongued individuals who was there at an early day, and on that account had quite a sense of his own importance, telling that he had fought Kiowas and Comanches down in Texas for years and years, but never kept any accurate account of the number of scalps he had taken. He was small, wiry, nervous, pock-marked, very red-faced, and addressed as "Major;" his other name has escaped me.

When we reached the camp where the dead and scalped cook was, it seemed so much like war, that we immediately elected the red-faced warrior to command our small company, and agreed to obey him, which we did for a while, but first buried the cook, whose body was still warm. It was done with little ceremony, the Major, with a serious face, essaying a prayer, which was a sad failure. It didn't fit at all and he forgot it besides. He did not order any of us to go on with it, and I could almost have laughed if I had not been so frightened.

About that time some one cried, "Indians!" and every man flew for his horse. It proved to be only a cloud of dust caused by some of Tuttle's cattle, and we all breathed freer. How I wished I could transfer myself to my mother's kitchen and watch her making cakes and pies! How I did scold myself for a fool for leaving Dodge City that morning and getting into such a scary place!

These thoughts passed through my mind and others took their place, but one thing was always uppermost, and that was fright—but I had plenty of company.

We went out ten miles farther and rounded up the herd, turning them towards Dodge. Nearly half of the men wanted to go after the Indians and did ride out around for two or three miles, but the doughty Commander and the blacksmith stayed with the herd, and right then I lost confidence in them.

We did see a half-dozen Indians watching us from different points, and I wonder that they did not take us in or try to, but we had no fight that day and drove rapidly towards the river. I never saw cattle driven faster. Not being used to the saddle I was rapidly getting very tired. It was getting towards night, and only a bite to eat had we had. The weather was very warm and we had nothing to drink. I told my man John we would leave the herd and start for town, which place we reached about nine in the evening, completely fagged out. We had been reported killed, and our friends were perfectly delighted to see us again. In our eagerness to reach Dodge, we wore out our—Tuttle's—horses, and the long, anxious, unaccustomed ride had numbed me from my feet, even above my hips.

I was lifted from the saddle, carried to a chair and stimulants were administered in such profusion that it seemed to me as if I were being worked over for a snake-bite and the poison fully antidoted. My mouth was swollen full of a tongue that was so dry and rough it seemed like a cat's. At first neither of us could talk at all, only gasp. In a very few moments the elixir worked beautifully as a lubricant and our tongues fairly flew.

As soon as our friends could get in a word, they told us we were not the only frightened people, as a number of times during the day rumors were rife that the Indians were coming in to take Dodge and massacre the population. Taken all in all, it was the most exciting day of our lives.

Four miles out from the city was a military post called Fort Dodge, and capable of accommodating two companies of infantry. Usually, I think, it had but one company, but another one arrived and both were under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis. We were told that the Indians crossed the Santa Fé Railroad the next morning, about twenty miles west of Dodge, and that somewhere not far from there, the troops and some cowboys encountered them; that the whites were defeated, with the loss of Colonel Lewis and a few private soldiers. The real details I was not able to learn on account of the great excitement and many rumors afloat. Certain it is, the troops did not capture them, and they kept on north through Kansas into Nebraska, killing and robbing everybody on their way. They were followed by a large number of troops, estimated by an army officer to be at least twelve hundred, and they never did halt them.

The Indians made rather light of being followed by regular troops, and said, when the bugle blew in the morning, they knew the troops were getting up; then there was the breakfast call and the call to start; about that time they pulled out themselves. Finally, up in Nebraska, this raiding band of Indians were turned over to the troops or the Government, by their friends, were disarmed and taken into Fort Robinson, in Northwest Nebraska. Years afterwards I was visiting the Commandant of that same post, and was informed by an army officer that that band of Indians broke loose from Robinson, struck out on the prairie unarmed, were pursued by the troops and slaughtered, squaws, pappooses and bucks, all but a very few. If that ever appeared in print, I did not see it. The great victory was never officially reported by the authorities at Washington, that we could learn, and was probably kept off the records exactly as it occurred, and was squelched, as lots of other frontier occurrences were.

We learned, while associating among army men, government scouts and other well-posted men, that the United States in this latter part of the century has rarely ever whipped any of its renegade Indians, but that they are either bought or betrayed. I quite incline to believe the truth of this, because officers told me that Generals Cook and Custer were our only Indian fighters, and most of the time some one in authority handicapped them so they were unable to accomplish anything. They said the rest of our commanders were mere newspaper generals, and from what I could learn, after many years' residence at the front, I fully believe it.

It is rather amusing to people out West to read the Eastern press dispatches about matters and happenings in their locality. It is more than amusing, it is disgusting, and quite looks as if newspapers could make or unmake a general in a day. The worst of it is, these reports can never be successfully refuted.

That raid of '78 was the first since '74, and more than seventy white people of all ages were known to have been murdered. Frontiersmen say: "If there were less politics in Congress, less time spent in the Cabinet in naming men for offices, so as to cut a certain political party figure, and a heap more time given to the ways and means for protecting our outlying districts from Indian depredations and white rascality, it would be far better for our country." It is even hinted that the Indian question has always been handled just exactly wrong. To keep on forever and eternally paying, and even paying over and over again, for something fairly won, has never before occurred in the history of nations. There is certainly much sense in the remark, and I further agree that this Indian problem should not be nationally settled by Massachusetts, Connecticut and Philadelphia; let them take care of their Indians and give the same privilege to the Western States, and they would probably settle the problem in their boundaries for once and all time.

The farce of an army of less than twenty-five thousand men trying to protect a country so large that not an American alive, even in this electric age, can realize the one-hundredth part of its vast expanse, ought to be about exploded.

To prove how little some people know about it, I am told that not many years ago, a man away up in office could not bound the Indian Territory, and did not know it was nearly so large as all the New England States put together, and thought wherever it was or whatever it might be, it was filled with a howling mob of blanket Indians running around seeking whom they might devour. And yet right there, there were Indians who knew more geography, more mathematics, more political economy, more law, than he did, and had far more good sense, general knowledge of the world, and more money than this great individual. But that is about the way it is nowadays; scheming politicians get all the fat offices, regardless of their ability to fill them, and first-class citizens of learning, good sense and good sound judgment are passed by and often utterly ignored.

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CHAPTER X.

DURING the Indian scare nearly every one in Dodge carried firearms; and the consequence was that there was quite a bit of shooting going on in town, even more than ordinarily, when weapons were supposed to be laid one side.

One morning I was writing at a desk in the only brick store in town, and my partners George and Will, were out in front, when some trouble occurred between some cowboys and the city marshals, in a saloon just adjacent. About the time the fuss began and the bang, bang of the heavy Colt's revolvers rang out on the air, I heard rapid footsteps in the building in which I was sitting, and looking out through the glass-cased office, I saw my partners just tearing through the store and to the back stairway leading up overhead. Up the stairs they went, or rather stumbled, for their minds moved quicker than their legs. I was thoroughly frightened myself; but the anxiety those boys manifested to get up the stairs, caused me to laugh until I actually shed tears.

By the time they reached the top of the flight, the shooting was over, and with all the number of shots fired, only one man was hit, and he not seriously wounded. The men at camp on the river bottom complained that the bullets at times whistled uncomfortably close, and the shooters seemed very careless. A good many similar shooting scrapes occurred during our stay at Dodge, and in most instances we were quite near where they took place. Very many times we were on the run to the brick store; and behind the sugar and salt barrels, were our most favored places of shelter. The proprietors of the store never complained of our hurried movements or of our desire for seclusion; they only laughed and let us do as we pleased.

The last evening before leaving town, we were in a dance hall, rapt spectators of the moving, indescribable mass of human beings, when suddenly we saw a man pull a long knife, make a quick lunge at a woman, striking her just under the eye, and laying her cheek wide open. The blood flowed in a stream but she did not seem to mind it, only moved up to the bar and called for a drink. I asked a man near me what he cut her for, and he answered, "Oh, a quarrel I suppose." I said, "Why doesn't some one whip him or take him in charge?" He answered, "It is all right; no one will take any trouble about it; she is his woman."

That was enough for us, and quickly departing, we went down to our camp by the river, glad that this was our last night in Dodge for some time to come.

But now I am ahead of my story, and must go back a few days. As the raiders were reported to have gone north, we began to look about among the cattle with a view to purchasing, and we had a fine opportunity to see the largest number together that we had ever seen before or since. About a dozen herds, or bunches, as they were called, were thrown together for safe keeping, and the number was estimated at nearly or quite forty thousand head. We had the pleasure of seeing them separated, and there must have been fully one hundred and fifty cowboys at work, cutting out the different brands of cattle. Viewed from an eminence it was a great sight, and as wearying to the eye as a three-ring circus.

We had a good chance to select, and very soon bought a small number of two-year-old heifers, to be delivered shortly, as soon as we should be ready for them. We needed some more cow-ponies for handling our cattle, consisting of two hundred and fifty head, and hearing of some, five miles northwest, George, John and I set out mounted, in quest of them. It was a very warm day, and after getting out of town about four miles, we came to a spring gushing out from under a large rock by the trail. A man had provided shelter, and also some keg beer. We indulged moderately, and then bought a small keg of him to be kept for our return.

After reaching the pony herd, we were treated to a camp dinner and lounged around for two or three hours, smoking, and dickering for the ponies. We agreed on half a dozen head, and as it was getting late in the afternoon, started on our return. The spring was shortly reached, and by the aid of some strangers, the keg was emptied. Every one became quite sociable and very chatty, and for fun a race into town was proposed. It was a helter-skelter affair, and while one man was thrown from his horse, he was only shocked. This put a stop to the race, and we straggled the rest of the way. Pretty soon two or three cowboys put in an appearance with Tuttle's horse herd, saying there were Indians north of the town, and they did not dare stay longer with the cattle herd. It created quite a scare, and it was not known until next day that our party were the Indians, and our racing the occasion of the scare. It is needless to add that some cowboys were discharged and we were blamed.

Being satisfied that the majority of the Indian raiders had gone north, we went out from Dodge about twenty miles, cut out the heifers we had purchased, and brought them into the branding-pens near town, for the purpose of putting our own brand on them. We selected a brand;

it was a six-inch circle with a bar straight across. So our brand was known as the Circle-Bar, and it was always my brand as long as I was in the business.

In order to brand cattle the easiest and most satisfactory way, we drove them into a strong pen, with a still stronger chute or lane, into which they were run, and when the chute was full and the strong bar put behind the last animal, it was impossible for them to turn around or get away, and we could brand them at our leisure. But cattlemen were nearly always in a hurry and there was no time wasted. One kept the fire burning merrily, another passed back and forth with the redhot irons, and two or three applied them rapidly. The animals didn't suffer for any length of time, and in a few minutes the severest was over. In ten minutes from the time the iron was applied, I have seen the critter grazing as quietly as if nothing had happened.

There seemed to be a fascination about applying the irons to the animals, and I have seen plenty of men engaged in the work for pure love of it. The odor from the burning hair and sizzling skin and the frightened look of the beasts were never extremely agreeable to me, and I usually tended the fire. I never seemed to enjoy the suffering of animals unless enraged with them; then it was bliss. I recall well when I was a lad and had my milk-pail partly filled, that the old cow, either from flies or some other cause, would put a foot squarely in the pail, and the milking-stool would be used as a club. I have seen others with heavenly dispositions turn a countenance wreathed in smiles into one of fiendishness and ferocity, and all because one of their animals had innocently blundered.

The cattle were branded and in our possession, moving slowly down the river. The grub-wagon was loaded and gone on ahead to a spot selected for our camp the first night. We left Dodge City with light hearts and a happy feeling of pride because we were cattle owners. Our ardor got dampened the first night, and our respect for our herder was vastly increased. It began to rain about supper time, and we pitched our tent. We picketed our horses near by, giving all a feed of grain, and one man staid with the cattle, or went out on herd.

It came on to rain harder, blew some, and the cattle were rather restless so that it seemed to require two of us to keep them from straying too great a distance. But presently they got quiet, although the rain poured down steadily and it became so dark we could only distinguish the animals when very close to them. Our man John went to the tent for a much-needed rest, and George and I took charge of the bunch, sitting bolt upright in our saddles in the pouring rain. Shortly one of us went into the tent to lie down, and left the other on guard. After a couple of hours, which seemed half a night, the other came in, wakened his partner and he started for the herd, but never found it, but his pony brought him back to camp, and then we both tried singly and together. Each time we came back to camp, but no cattle were found. As a last resort John was hurriedly wakened, and in a disgusted frame of mind, without having had enough sleep, he mounted his pony, and that was the last we saw of him until the gray of the morning, when calling us, he said: "Boys, take the cattle for a while, as I want to take a nap."

We saddled up and hastened to the herd, now dimly visible not more than half a mile away. The morning was raw and cheerless, the rain falling lightly. We hadn't slept enough; our joints were stiff and sore, causing us to feel listless and dispirited. Somehow the cattle business had lost its charm, and we were silent, sober and serious.

By and by John got up, prepared a simple breakfast, of which we partook by turns. The rain ceased, the sun came out. John took the bunch slowly along the trail, and we followed with the grub wagon, as happy, bright and talkative as children.

Our third partner, Will W—— was not with us, having left Dodge for camp by rail and stage at the same time we took the trail. It was thought best for one man to go on to camp to look after matters there. It was agreed that Will should do so, and he was by no means loth to go.

In order to get the cattle on our own range and stay by the Texas trail, we were obliged to drive about one hundred and fifty miles, but we had plenty of time in which to do it. Indeed, we had hardly intended to drive our cattle at all, but just drift, heading them in the right direction. The weather was bright and sunny, the cattle handled nicely, and three or four days passed without incident. Then one morning while John was on the last watch, or in the gray just before dawn, his cattle bedded and resting quietly, he heard a sound from the northwest, the meaning of which he knew only too well. He knew it was a bunch of cattle coming in his direction and if not stopped, would mix with our cattle and perhaps cause a general stampede. Fortunately the on-coming herd was winded and about ready to pull up. John headed them about half a mile from our cattle, rounded them up easily, and in a short time had them all lying down. When our cattle arose, yawned and stretched, acting, as they do, for all the world just like human beings, John headed them southeast, and they moved slowly along, grazing as they went, getting entirely out of the way of the strange herd.

Meantime, we were preparing breakfast and holding some one's cattle close. Breakfast things were cleared away, blankets rolled up and all articles safely stowed in our grub wagon preparatory to moving slowly along towards our cattle, now distant more than a mile, when a rider came tearing along at a furious pace, hatless, breathless; and pulling his reeking horse back upon his haunches, he hastily exclaimed, "I say, you fellows, have you seen a bunch of cattle branded thus and so, in this neighborhood?" John rode up just then, and wanting to guy the man a trifle, said, "What brands did you say the cattle had on them?" The man was profuse in his explanations of the different marks and brands, and after some further conversation, the man getting in great haste, John said, "Those are your cattle, the ones you have just ridden past; you didn't know your own herd."

Then how we did laugh at him, and laughed still more at his conversation, for as soon as he found out that his cattle were safe, he grew quite talkative and witty. He said he was on the last watch just before daybreak, and the cattle were so quiet he thought he would sort of lop over on the grass by his horse, and said he, "Of course I had to fall asleep. I woke with a start, feeling sure something was wrong, and there was, for there was not a hoof in sight; all were gone, the seventeen cripples and all."

We yelled with laughter and had a jolly time. Never was a man more thankful than he, and with a ringing good bye, we left him alone with his herd, and pulled slowly over the divide.

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CHAPTER XI.

AFTER being two weeks on the road we reached camp in the latter part of October, without loss and with not more than a half-dozen lame animals. The latter part of the journey was considerable of a hardship for us, the weather coming on quite cold; and with insufficient clothing and covering, we really suffered very much. As we neared home the excitement, mental strain, worry and exposure, all together, rather got away with me, and I had to take to the house. But when there I had no time to give up and go to bed; I had to wash dishes, sweep, clean and help get meals, so I had only changed my occupation. But my cold and fever didn't last long.

The weather was very chilly and we felt it keenly. The mercury didn't get so very low, but the wind searched out every crack and crevice, and the house, not tight at the best, was just like a barn. So George started for Medicine for lumber with which to patch our building, and also to bring back a goodly stock of provisions.

Meantime, the cattle were restless and were making us much trouble, not getting wonted to the range; and although we kept up good spirits we were not so merry as we had been. Our temperaments inclined to be mercurial. Matters not going exactly to suit us made us rather down in the mouth, but we were cheered and shaking hands over the arrival of a fine red calf, our first increase. All new babies are reported as "bouncing" ones; all newly arrived calves are "fine" ones. I expatiated somewhat in my notes, and went quite into details just about that time:

"We don't calculate to lose a single head this winter. The only way we can think of whereby we might lose any would be that some fat heifers might stray a long distance away and get into some large herd where the herders would kill them for beef." We learned that from our man John. "The one in whom we place entire faith, on whom we place absolute reliance, and whom we obey implicitly in all that relates to the cattle and horses, as well as for some other things, is our herder, John Curry. His ability to follow the trail of a strayed animal for miles over hills and dales, through timber and all kinds of country, until he reaches the end of his search, is remarkable. He keeps a trail on horseback, no sign of which can any of us see, often moving at a trot." He was invaluable in hunting stray stock of any description, and when any of us gave out and stopped hunting, right then John took hold and invariably the same day or the one after he would roll in with the lost animal.

I was not entirely recovered from my little illness, and an event which happened at this time did not help matters any. I saddled up and started off on a little errand to Mule Creek, about twenty miles away. Starting back the same day, darkness overtook me eight or ten miles from home, and I lost my way, or thought I had. I kept on for a while, but matters didn't improve and the country didn't look quite right, so I went into camp, such as it was; a rolling buffalo-grass divide, not a stick or tree, not even a bush or any weeds. I had no rope with which to tie my horse to my saddle, but using the bridle reins and tying the horse's head to one of his forelegs, I turned him loose to graze. Then I took the saddle for a pillow and the blanket for a covering; it only came down to my knees, was quite thin, and didn't fill the bill very well for a frosty night. I lay me down to sleep and had cold feet—I don't as a rule, but that night was an exception. It was a night of dreams—dreams where I figured poorly and was awakened frequently as if from a nightmare. Once I dreamed that John and I were away down in a deep cañon, and what a rousing log-fire we had and how warm it was! That bright dream was too beautiful to last any great length of time, and the chattering of my teeth, sounding like castanets, awoke me again.

At times I shook like a pointer dog in his anxiety over a bone, with another dog not far off. At times the sharp, shrill bark of the coyote aroused me, only to doze off again. I was too cold to be frightened. There are about three hundred and sixty-five nights in an ordinary year, but '78 had more, for on many occasions I put in a great many nights in one, and this was a fair sample of some of them.

Long before sun-up I found and saddled my horse, and struck out over the divide. I shortly came to what we called our cross-roads, and was within a couple of miles of the ranch. I rode up to the house as the cook was building the morning fire, and he came laughing to the door, saying:

"Lost again! Where on the prairie did you rest last night?"

As all were awake and joined in the laugh, I became a trifle vexed, and my answer is not recorded.

It was early in November, and our camp, all told, had killed twenty-one turkeys; but they had now become so shy that their meat was quite a rarity. We were waiting for snow, and then, we thought, some of those handsome gobblers would be ours; and they were, too.

A box now reached us from our Eastern friends, being packed with all sorts of good things to eat, wear and use. It even had a gun and some ammunition in it, which, taken with all the rest, caused great delight. Children merry over the contents of Christmas stockings were never more delighted than we; it was a Christmas for us, and we were youngsters over again. The faces of John and our fat cook were wreathed in smiles, for we found articles for them, whether so intended or not. All were happy, and their faces beamed. The contents of the box had the call, and for a short time all else was forgotten. How primitive it all was, and what children of a larger growth we all were!

It seemed nothing more than a camping-out play spell; at times that's all it was. It was no child's play, though, to hold our cattle, and we ceased trying to keep them nearer the house than four miles. They found some choice grass down our creek about that distance, and, while they evidently wanted to move south, the excellent feed in that locality seemed to attract them. That rambling spirit on the part of cattle made it very hard on us, and particularly hard on our horses, who were beginning to show the effects of much labor.

We saw an occasional antelope and quite a number of turkeys, but we were too busy to hunt them, and our meat diet consisted largely of bacon—fat side-meat at that. Our appetites didn't crave luxuries, and not a complaint was heard, although occasionally some one remarked, "I wish I had some fish and oysters," and another said, "How would a nice, juicy steak go?" Then some one else brought us down to prose by saying, "Oh, dry up; good old side-meat is plenty good enough for us all, and it is all you'll get until you kill something." And so it went; all serious matters ended in jokes and laughter, so that homesickness had no chance to put a footstep across our threshold.

We did a little haying in November. That would seem a little late in the season to Eastern people, and it was. We cut it down, and immediately hauled it in, perfectly cured. It wasn't for feeding purposes particularly, but more for shelter, and we considered it very poor hay. Another kind put up earlier, with more juice and nourishment in it, was fed ordinarily. We used the late hay as a sort of thatch and windbreak for our horses, covering the stable very thickly with it, making it very comfortable, but before spring the horses would eat up their protection, leaving their good hay untouched. The only way to account for it is, the natural perversity of the beasts—like human beings for all the world. That is just where the animal in us shows out, and that isn't the only place either.

Sometimes in putting up hay for old and weak stock, there had been a great deal of it left in windrows and very thin on the ground. I have seen cattle leave stacks of first-class hay and eat up close that browned and dried stuff left on the prairie, that wasn't even fit for bedding. No one can explain it. Certain ones strong of lung and supposedly strong in mind, give reasons for such things, but they fall flat.

The true instincts of animal nature have never been accurately ascertained any more than we know the elements of electricity; we know partly what it does, but we do not know what it is.

We rose early, and breakfast was over just after daylight. Our labors for the day were completed at dark, and eight or nine o'clock found us in our cots. We were trying to be economical, and sat around on our boxes until we were all getting round-shouldered, but a little later George brought us a half-dozen chairs from Medicine Lodge, and we were so happy in their possession that we preferred sitting on them to going out and attending to our regular duties.

We had butter once a week, and the balance of the time used a gravy made of flour and water stirred into the bacon grease. Sugar was allowed about half the time, and no cake or preserves or sweets of any kind, except a few stewed wild plums. And yet we didn't suffer with dyspepsia. If doctors would only prescribe it, a fair amount of that kind of life and diet would undoubtedly give a resting spell to many a man's stomach; and then if he did not go back to his former habits and methods of living he would not need the services of a physician, at least not for stomach trouble.

I had an attack of what they call "dumb ague." The term seemed rather mild to me, but I let it go for fear of not improving on it religiously. I took enough quinine to break up a small cattle dealer, business, system and all. I was nervous and thin, and my clothes didn't fit me. The boys didn't dare let me go among the cattle for fear my ridiculous appearance would stampede them. I reminded myself most forcibly of the comical appearance Professor Goldwin Smith presented when I first saw him during my first year at Cornell University. He was coming down one of those steep Ithaca hills, a bundle of clothing dancing in the wind, and I said to myself, "Great heavens! Why don't the farmers take better care of their scarecrows than to let them go blowing down the street?" Some of our neighbors complained and asked our camp what it meant, strapping a scarecrow to a pony's back and turning it loose on the prairie.

Writing of scarecrows and clothes reminds me how hard we were on clothing. Fortunately we brought from home a large amount of wearing apparel and it lasted very well, but no sort of garments stand the cow business any great length of time. We found out that jeans, canvas, and leather were about all we could rely on, and shortly came to them, with the Eastern clothes we had brought with us all worn to shreds.

CHAPTER XII.

It was late in November, and three neighbors invited a member of our camp to go south on a ten days' hunt. We accepted, for we needed some fresh meat, there being only salt meat left in the larder. I was designated as the one to go, and, acting like other human beings, I demurred, and suggested first one and then the other, with a very sober countenance, for I much feared they would take me up on my offer, and I was wild to go myself, but wanted to seem generous whether I was so or not.

Meantime, our three friends, who were present, kept up a steady winking and blinking at me—whether to say, "Come on and go," or whether they meant that I was prevaricating a trifle or politely acting a white lie, it was impossible for me to tell. At any rate I was selected, and it seemed such a great undertaking, we were going so far south, right in among the Indians, too, that I hastily penned a few lines to my parents, and to a certain lady friend, bidding them good-bye, telling them, if I was killed they could have the consolation of knowing it was either by the Indians, by my friends, or by accident. There seemed to be but one other way for me to decease—I might commit suicide, but my letters would clearly indicate that in my then jubilant state of mind that was not to be thought of. Looking at the matter now, calmly and dispassionately, after a lapse of years, I hardly see how my Eastern friends could have obtained much satisfaction out of those farewell letters.

Furnishing my share of the provisions and cooking utensils, not forgetting my gun, ammunition and blankets, and, as usual, going without a sufficient supply of the latter, we jumped into the lumber wagon and, with a ringing "Good-bye," we were off. Down through the timber we went, out on the other side, horses on the dead run, shaking our hats back at our comrades, who showed signs of sorrow in the midst of their smiles, as much as to say, "How I wish I were going!"

Our spirits were at the top notch, and as we swung up on the hill, taking the splendid divide road leading south, no four happier men could be found. Those two beautiful greyhounds, brother and sister, went bounding along in a perfect ecstasy of joy. One minute they were half a mile away and the next they were back by the wagon, bounding and leaping over the ground with an ease and freedom which was perfectly exhilarating. It was fun to watch them, when, having apparently some objective point in view, they bounded over the buffalo-grass at a jack-rabbit pace, opening and shutting just like a jack-knife, apparently never tiring.

We made about twenty-five miles the first day, and went into camp at night, having killed nothing but a few quails and a jack-rabbit. Our supper consisted of hot biscuits made by one of the party, who used sour dough and soda with which to make them, bacon, coffee, and sorghum molasses, no great luxuries, but very filling.

We had no tent but used our wagon sheet, which covered all of us when sleeping, and had only a moderate amount of blankets; so we lay very close together, sleeping mostly, but shivering some. The next day at an early hour our journey was resumed, and before the day was over we killed two antelopes, and that, too, without the use of our dogs.

While driving along a rather narrow divide, and reaching a little rise of ground, we saw them not far away. They saw us and struck down to the right, apparently to cross a deep hollow or draw. They foolishly changed their minds, turned around, and came right back towards us, intending to pass within about seventy-five yards. They never got clear by. Running like the wind and keeping low to the ground, without any high leaps, they presented a splendid mark, of which Roll C—— and I were not slow to take advantage. Only two shots fired, and each animal rolled over and over and never got up again. All hands turned to, became butchers, and soon had them cut up, so that we had fried antelope for supper, cooked over a fire of buffalo-chips, but we had almost no water, none for the animals anyhow.

We had taken up so much time with our antelope that night overtook us some distance from the stream, and we went into camp on a bleak prairie with a still blacker sky overhead. It was cloudy, threatening and windy. We picketed our horses firmly and turned in early. Later we were covered with a mantle of snow and slept the sleep of the just, whatever that may be.

The weather turned very cold at daylight, and with trembling hands and bodies, and nothing to eat, for we had nothing with which to make a fire, we hooked up and set forth determined to find timber and water. The snow covered the trail, which was a blind one at best, and it was not more than an hour or two until we were completely lost and going on blindly. We drove on and on, getting colder and colder until we were perfectly numb. We knew there were cow-camps not far off, so we made great efforts to find one, finally meeting with success just about when we were going to some timber to see what we could do.

We drove up to that camp, feeling that it was indeed a welcome port in a storm. Yells and cheers quickly brought out three cowboys from their dug-out, and we said: "Boys, come help us with our team, for we are frozen stiff as a wedge," which was probably a slight exaggeration, but it sounded emphatic anyhow.

Not one of those fellows knew us, but that did not matter. They went right to work with the horses and bringing in our things, saying; "Get inside and warm yourselves; we'll get you some chuck shortly." Such a cordial invitation as that was not to be slighted. How we did hug that log-fire, and how we did praise that dug-out! No house was ever more thoroughly appreciated.

All this time our teeth were chattering, but we were talking a perfect streak, and getting acquainted very rapidly. How fine the coffee did smell and the juicy beef tenderloin being fried in its own tallow! I know that cook put enough meat in that large pot for six men, and we four ate every bit of it. We had a Behring Straits appetite, and some of the tallow went too. Little things are said to make up the sum and substance of the human existence; that meal could scarcely be included under that head. The men at the camp supposed we were a party out hunting from up in the State, and when they knew we were quite a bit on the cow racket like themselves, they couldn't do enough for us.

We spun yarns away late into the night, and the trip was worth all that it had cost us and a deal more.

In the morning when we started away, they gave us twenty-five or thirty pounds of fresh meat, and would not take any of our antelope in exchange. They said they could get game any time and they preferred beef as a standby and for all purposes. So did we, with one exception: buffalo meat beats beef. We scarcely ever heard a dissenting voice to that.

The boys cheered us on our way, giving us directions where game was most likely to be found, and we were off. So far our hounds had had no opportunity to do business in their particular line, but that morning it was different. As we were driving along at a moderate pace, the greyhounds trotting easily beside the wagon, a jack-rabbit jumped out from under a protecting bush about seventy-five yards away; we pointed it out to the hounds with a cheering yell, and away they went.

To describe a chase like that is beyond me, and cannot be imagined very well by those who have never seen one like it. Fortunately for a good view of the finish, the rabbit wheeled and circled the wagon, and one of the dogs caught him and threw him high into the air in plain sight, and when he came down one of the hounds was on him and he was dead. We petted the dogs, gave them rabbit for their good chase, and I was satisfied they were a success. I had already seen a few of that class of dogs with no record and not deserving any, so my faith in them had been shaken, but these hounds were all right.

Our party contained one excellent shot, Roll G——, equally good with the rifle and shotgun, and of course on him our main reliance was placed. Another man, John C——, a great big, good-natured, honest farmer, knew little more about a gun than a cow does about a baseball bat. He went along, not to kill, but to help cut up. Another of the party was Frank S——, not very much of a hunter, but a good man with hounds, and the owner of those with us. Lastly, I was—in my own estimation, at least—quite a prominent member of the party, and what was lacking in shooting ability, was made up in anxiety.

We lost our way again shortly after leaving that most comfortable dug-out, and did not follow directions at all. But along in the afternoon we brought up in the timber, quite a likely-looking spot for game, and went into camp. Roll C—— and I immediately went out hunting, and by night had brought to bag four turkeys, very fine ones. We hung them up on the trees, and later John C—— went after them on horseback. We also shot a couple dozen of quails, and our game-bag was beginning to show no mean proportions.

From the creek we pulled up on the Cimarron divide, and a beautiful country it was, too, especially to cattlemen. A carpet of buffalo-grass as far as the eye could reach. No more beautiful sight exists in nature; these are the sentiments of men who live off of grass; they don't chew baled hay either, neither do they chew their words.

As we pulled easily along over the prairie, our sensitive eyes detected a bunch of possibly twenty-five or thirty antelope, quietly feeding, and they didn't see us.

"Right about, and get down to biz," was the order.

The team was picketed, and Frank S—— took the hounds in leash. We four men made a spread (not a table spread, just a prairie spread) and it was a daisy. Inequality of ground and ravines helped us and it took more than an hour to get in position. At a signal we moved on their works. An antelope headed off two or three points of the compass, is as big a fool as a wild turkey, and that is expressing it strong. Those antelopes ran first in one place and then in another, all except the right place, where there was an opening for them to have escaped all else except the hounds. They ran right among us, in close proximity, and the battle began.

Bang, bang, bang, went the guns. Away went the hounds, and they nailed one too. Roll C—— and I were active, so was John C——. I saw four antelopes fall before Roll C——'s and my bullets, and in spite of the slaughter it was comical. I can see them now, one sitting upon its haunches like a dog, another trying to stand on its head, and still two others rolling over and over, kicking dust in every direction. The hounds were worrying one poor beast, Frank was trying to drag them away, and I called Roll's attention to John C——, who was firing his Winchester right up in the air, doing great work he seemed to think. We yelled with laughter, and called his attention to his Fourth-of-July celebration, and he wilted. He didn't have the buck fever, he was rattled—that was all.

About this time a magnificent buck was coursing over the prairie, with one leg hanging in the air, and we started the hounds after him. It was the best three-legged race I ever saw. He got clear away, and with ease apparently. Whether the hounds were worn with their run and worrying the antelope they had caught, I could not tell. Certain it is, they did not catch the three-legged buck. I have seen some sport and quite a bit of game brought to bag in a short space of time, but I think there were five handsome animals laid low as quickly as often happens, or as ever happened for that matter.

The balance of the day was spent in dressing the game, and at night we safely made a piece of timber not far from the Cimarron, where we were headed. Towards night we killed some quail, and later a few turkeys off from the roost.

For two days after we wandered with little success except some quail, and on the next day it was so cold we hunted a cow-camp and found one, but unfortunately for us the proprietor was at home, but not to strangers. Mr. D. Sheedy was a great cattleman, a marvel in his own estimation. He would neither give nor sell us shelter or provisions. His men wanted to do something for us, but his watchful eye was on the alert.

After a night of intense suffering in the vicinity of his camp we quit our southward journeying, and short of some of the necessities, including blankets, we turned our heads homewards, reached our camp in two days' steady pulling, with quite a bit of suffering from extreme cold.

It was a great hunt so far as I was concerned, but did not pan out quite as the other boys expected. However, my share of the game was by no means small, and we had quite a time of feasting in camp. While my friends were glad to see me back, I think the sight of the game was equally pleasing.

Thus ended my first really big hunt in the Indian Territory. That it would have been a much greater one, and larger game procured, is almost a certainty had we received decent treatment from the aforesaid wealthy cattle owner. It is the only time I ever received such inhospitable treatment in my life, and I've never heard of a range incident like it. There were a number of buffalo within a few miles, and one of the riders was anxious to show them to us, but we were so disheartened that home seemed the only place for us. Some months later I met that same wealthy cattleman on the Medicine Lodge divide, and he started in to give me some good advice. I was not disrespectful, but my countenance took on such a far-away look he quickly ceased his harangue and rode away. I had not forgotten his chilly treatment and our empty stomachs, and he knew perfectly well the cause of my coolness.

CHAPTER XIII.

Among a few letters of mine written at that exuberant period I append the following, not so much for their literary merit, but because they sound different to me from what they did then, and might interest the reader. Of course we are living in an electric age, when we are surprised at nothing that happens in the daily future—some of us are surprised that we did not know it all, I mean quite a number of things that have passed.

These letters are not modestly put forward, because, while they are copied verbatim, they are good enough of their kind:

"Walnut Grove Ranch, December, '78.

"My Dear Mother: Some young men who went hunting with me are about to start for their place, which is near a post-office, and I write very hastily to tell you that I am back safe from my hunt and had a glorious jaunt down through 'The Nation,' seeing most magnificent scenery. How I wish father could have seen it, but I am going to take him down there when he comes out here to see me, so he will have something to look forward to. I am writing in the greatest hurry, and the boys are waiting for me to finish, so I won't try to answer your letter of November 18th until another time, when all questions will be answered. The result of our hunt was seven antelope, twenty-four turkeys and twenty quail, and six prairie chickens. Of course we got lost—we always do. We had magnificent runs with our greyhounds after jack-rabbits and antelope, and they caused a wild cat to leave life in a hurry, not, however, until they were somewhat scratched. I shall try and give you a detailed description of our hunt in a future letter, and so will not in this one."

I never did, probably because other and nearer matters were of more interest.

"We suffered terribly from cold, hunger, and scarcity of water, but felt amply repaid for our trip. It has done me an immense amount of good. Am feeling in fine spirits, tremendous appetite, and so on. Our cattle are doing finely, horses are getting well of their sore backs, and everything is moving like clockwork. We are hauling our winter supply of corn for our horses from Medicine Lodge, or rather, our man is. We take turns herding, but our right bower, John, does the bulk of it. Have no more time, but hope to hear from you right soon. Your affectionate son,

Ben."

December, '78.

"MY DEAR J——: The last letter I wrote you was mailed at Painted Post, a post-office on our route going hunting. The place consists principally and entirely of one log-house. Not a very large place in the East, but quite a town out here. They have a mail there once a week, or try to, and send one back ditto. I am back safe, notwithstanding that I roasted, hungered, thirsted and froze. Right here let me announce, and I do so with tears streaming in young canals adown my innocent cheeks, we slaughtered no Indians, although once we were taken for them and came near laying down our lives as a sacrifice to curiosity, or better, to a desire for knowledge. Yes, we came near being shot, or shot at. I have since had slight doubts whether the scared fools would have hit us, or me rather, for of course I should have cast my body in front of the other boys, to shield them, saying: 'Boys, stay behind this mighty bulwark of flesh and be safe.' There is a bare possibility that I should have taken a little run just for exercise, or perhaps have dug a hole in the sand for water, the surface water being salty. These things occur to me at this moment. Had the shooting actually commenced, I cannot be positive as to what might have happened. To-day my bones might have made white marks in the sand, along with the buffaloes and other animals. I can think of about fifty-three things that might have happened, but didn't. I won't stop to enumerate them now, for it would run me too far into the night, break my rest and render me unfit to pass judgment on a milch cow, for which we think of trading some pigs. We are going in the morning to look at the cow, and we must make a good trade or it may break us up in business. We are getting a little tired of our pigs; not expecting any sidewalks in this country and not being used to walking on pork as a substitute. We don't like them always under our feet, but they like to be there and there they will remain until definitely removed; consequently you see we would like them removed, and besides their appetites are a trifle too strong for this mild climate; there is no danger of their overeating, that is, there would be if we ever fed them, and now that we have one hundred and fifty bushels of corn stored away in our bin, some of us might relent and give them a kernel or two occasionally. But perhaps you will think I am doing overmuch speaking about our swine, but I'll stick to my text, 'tho' the whole herd run violently down a steep place and perish in the sea.' I wonder if that last is a joke. I feel as if I had lost something, and have all day, for that matter. Think I must have been dreaming. Well, if there is any one thing I do enjoy, it is a well-connected letter, where a person rambles from one topic to another, just as I rambled over our farm to-day in the timber. A lovely September day on the eleventh of December, and not one alone, but a number of them, except a slight interruption in the shape of a New York State snow-storm that came on us gently enough while out on our hunt, so gently in the night as not to waken us from our sweet and blissful slumbers, until morning dawn found a lovely covering over us of about three inches of snow; doubtless we all uttered a silent prayer embodying the few and emphatic words, 'I wish I were home.' None of us said anything to that effect, but our thoughts were fleeting as the weather was sleeting.

"But to resume, I strolled out quietly to-day, shotgun in hand, to drive in the horses, as we needed them in our business. Having found them and starting for home, I strolled on, trusting that a kind 'Divinity which shapes our ends' or something to that effect, would end in turning a turkey in my direction, so I could end him over and end his earthly career until he should end in our baking pan and on the table. Bills would ask me what end I would have, and I would assume a modest expression, and remark, 'Oh, never mind, I'm not particular; just give me a piece of the breast.' I continued to wend, but the birds did not end, but I had a lovely walk anyway and saw any amount of quail. I had too coarse shot for them, and only wasted one charge on one that rose up right in front of me, and the shot was so tempting that I made him quail at once. I was going along by the brookside, and hearing a noise, thought it was turkeys, but it was nothing but those blasted pigs chewing acorns. They are without doubt the greatest bother on earth. They shall either be sold or else we will kill and eat. I believe I could eat one of them myself, not because I have any appetite, simply out of spite. Since going hunting, my appetite has been poor; last night I ate only eight biscuits, four or five potatoes, three or four pieces of antelope and a few other things, and went to bed real peaceful. Bills is getting disgusted and says a sack of flour doesn't last any time at all and that we shall break ourselves up in business. He makes very nice sour-dough biscuits since I taught him how. You see I learned how to make them while on our trip, and they save a heap of expense in baking powder, which was costing us more than half as much as our flour. I tell you we are figuring fine and are so saving and economical. I believe I shall end in being a perfect miser, for dollars look as large as cart-wheels and they only go for necessaries, except when we get in such a place as Dodge or Wichita, and then we indulge in an occasional glass of lager, just to remind ourselves of old times. Well, J——, the boys have been in bed for a long time, the fire has gone out and it is getting very cold here, so I will leave this now and finish it later.

"Next day. Well, here it is about four P. M., and snowing like blazes. Quite a change has come over the spirit of the weather since yesterday, reminding us that in the midst of apparent summer, we are in winter. Now, if this snow keeps on falling to the depth of two or three inches, I shall be out in the morning bright and early after turkeys, instead of going for the mail, as we need some fresh meat very much, having only half an antelope left. We can track the turkeys in the snow and stand a fair chance of getting some. I will reserve writing about my hunt until the next letter, and then tell you a little about it. Am going on another one in about three weeks, and then shall have something to relate. I took a long ride to-day and my hands are still numb, although I came back two hours ago. Well, I will close for the present, and commence again some other time.

"Yours, B——."

It happened about this time that we did not go for our mail for over two weeks, but finally, one bitter cold day, I started after it, and had to run by the side of my horse numerous times to keep from freezing. We carried a two-bushel bag with us for the mail, and such little articles as we might need. The postmaster smiled when I asked if we had any mail, and no wonder. I carried home a little over a bushel of mail matter. It used up a whole day to go after it, and I did not get back until long after dark, and the snow was flying fast. The boys had begun to be worried about me, and also a little about their supper, a portion of which I was bringing them, as well as the news. Remembering my failing, they began to fear that I was lost, and they knew it was almost certain death to sleep out on such a night and without any preparation. Consequently they were rejoiced when they heard the cry, "United States mail," and the barking of the dogs also signaled my return. How we enjoyed our supper and gloated over the contents of our letters, books and papers, only those can fully understand who have lived in as isolated a section of country as that inhabited by us.

The next morning Will W—— and I expected to start for Wichita, and a cold ride, we feared. We expected it would take us a few days to drive the one hundred and thirty miles, bringing us there on Christmas Day; and we intended remaining a week, as it would take us that length of time to get through with all our business. It would seem singular to array ourselves again in civilized attire. We were looking forward to our stay in Wichita with many pleasurable anticipations, and were hoping that the weather would moderate, so we should not quite freeze on the way.

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CHAPTER XIV.

It is barely possible we went to Wichita after a supply of fun as well as provisions; we took one home, the other we didn't.

It was a hard cold ride and we took turns in driving. While one handled the reins, the whip and did the yelling at the poor beasts, the other would roll himself in blankets, lie back on the hay in the wagon and pretend to keep warm. It was a pretense and that was all. The horses did not suffer with the cold for we drove very rapidly, making Medicine Lodge the first day, and the ninety odd miles from there to the end of our journey, in a day and a half; thereby exceeding our expectations by a day and a half.

Quite a number of people seemed glad to see us in Wichita, and we were glad to see everybody. Up to the old "Occidental" we went, and tried to seem matter-of-course while we registered from Barber County. The proprietor was not fooled. We didn't take in the town, for the town took us in. Naval officers strike a port in America after a two or three years' cruise and are treated well, as they should be. We were not naval officers, only cowboys, but, oh my! I scarcely know what Wichita is now, but in '78 and '79 it was surely the "Queen of the Border." Better hospitality no town had. Our old friend Matthewson was the same cordial, kindly man as of yore, and we saw a good deal of him. Indeed, he rendered us valuable assistance in his quiet way. After doing our buying and visiting, and we did a great deal of both, we set the time of starting for the ranch. It came on to snow and there was a fall of nearly six inches. We had about twenty-five hundred pounds to haul back, and it was suggested that we needed another horse. We ought to have had two extra ones. Bill superintended the buying, as usual, and we had a three-horse singletree made. It did not work well and none of the horses pulled well. The new horse, on the outside, was so badly injured in the pull that he never recovered, although he did us fair service for a year or more.

It was a hard trip back to the ranch from Wichita, both on us and the horses, and one we did not care to take very soon again. The week spent in Wichita was very pleasant, but thinking it over later, we decided that "the game was not worth the candle." The weather was so cold and there was so much snow on the ground, that a number of our friends there sympathized with us, intimating that the loss of cattle would be very great and we would probably suffer proportionately. Not being well up in such matters, and not knowing how many days of continued snow cattle could stand without succumbing, we were very much worried. While there, we put on a cheerful air we were very far from feeling, and the desire to return to camp and find out if any cattle were still alive on the range, was strong within us.

After the hardest five days' pull we ever experienced, we reached camp and shouted out "Home again and mighty glad of it!" For two or three days the weather remained so cold and stormy that we stayed by the fire and didn't try to get over to the post-office. But there came a time when some one must go, unless we were willing to pass our evenings in total darkness, for we were out of kerosene and had only two candles left. I was designated to go, and suffered, in proportion, the same as on the Wichita trip. Let the mercury go down to zero there, and one of those delicate Kansas zephyrs spring up, and as near as I can calculate, it would be equal to about forty below in New York State. Sometimes it seemed as if I had no ears, hands or feet; then again, with those peculiar sensations from getting over numbness, it would seem as if I were all ears, hands and feet. Kansas never does things by halves. When a cold wave strikes that section, it is very cold; when warm, it is melting. In short, one seems to roast half the year and freeze the other half. Probably we were not acclimated. Each time any of us reached civilization and slept between sheets, we took severe colds and expected to, as a settled thing.

Our anxiety about our cattle was a good deal allayed when John told us that nowhere had he found a dead animal, and the cattle had shrunk but little. They had drifted with the storms and had gone quite a distance south. They had not eaten much grass for some days, but had simply browsed. When the storm first came John did not try to herd them, but let them go where they pleased. Joining in with other bunches, they drifted a good many miles south, and we did not have them under our control again until after the spring round-up. John rode the range more or less all the balance of the winter, but never saw more than two or three of our heifers together at any one time until the latter part of April.

The boys asked Will and me if we had had a good dinner at the hotel on Christmas Day. We answered by producing a bill of fare, and how their eyes did snap when they looked it over. On the list of good things were fifteen varieties of game, and among them were bear, antelope, venison, buffalo, and others too numerous to mention. Dinners at hotels often consist mostly of bills of fare, or did in Kansas in the 'you, but that dinner was really most excellent and the proprietor was entitled to much credit.

While the snow remained on the ground, George C—— and I took advantage of it for tracking turkeys. We went quite often, and rarely returned without bringing one or more of the big birds with us. Our plan was usually to strike out on horseback and travel slowly until we struck a fresh trail of one or more birds. Then, dismounting and tying our horses, we would take the trail on foot and invariably succeed in getting close enough for a shot. Sometimes we made a complete failure and went home empty-handed, to be laughed at for our pains; but more often we took a bird or two with us.

One day we went out after them and were down on our creek three to four miles, riding slowly along and keeping a bright lookout, when over to one side, and moving slowly up the hill, in the shining snow, we saw a large flock of the birds, their backs glistening in the sunlight. I said, "George, how many do you think there are of them?"

In an excited manner he answered, "I think there are a hundred, two hundred, yes, three hundred."

I said, "Hadn't you better make it five hundred and done with it?"

There were fully that number! It was a beautiful sight, and never did I see it duplicated but once. With all that number of birds, and work as hard as we could, we succeeded in killing only five. The weather being cold, our game kept all right, so that during all the winter we had more or less of it hanging on a line in front of our house, stretched from one walnut tree to another. We had so much game it palled on us, and we concluded to have a luxury in the shape of some fresh pork, so we killed one of our pigs (we had not disposed of all of them), and had pork and apple sauce for a change, and a most agreeable one it was, too.

Among other questions the boys asked Will and myself was, if we had met any cattlemen during our absence, and that reminded us to tell them that on our way back we had stopped at the Updegraff Ranch on the Chicaskia for the night. The house was small, but the proprietor made room for sixteen of us all the same. Among those we met there, was quite a noted cattleman by the name of Johnson. He, with a Boston man, had just come from the Eagle Chief Ranch. We became well acquainted and had a great confab. It was so cold none of us could sleep much, if any, so we just talked and told stories all night long. We met those gentlemen many a time after that, but never did so much talking on any one occasion thereafter.

About four years later Mr. Johnson was killed by a bolt of lightning out of a clear sky while riding with two of his men, one on each side, over the prairie, and they were not injured at all. He was one of the brightest and most successful cattlemen in the Southwest, and after his death his assets showed that his large fortune had been rather under than over estimated, something which rarely happens.

Our first heavy snow was nearly all melted and the sun had been out for some days, warming the air so that we were able to be around part of the time without any coats on. A few days of this fine weather, and then a norther came down upon us, which drove us all indoors and close around the stove.

After it was settled once more, I saddled my horse, took my gun and struck out down the creek, intending to be absent a few hours. I did not not get home again until the afternoon of the third day. After riding some fourteen miles, I had reached the dug-out of some acquaintances, and being strongly urged had concluded to stay all night. I turned my horse loose with theirs, and the next morning when I went to get him he was gone. By taking his trail for a short distance, I found that he had started for home. No one coming for me, on the third day I borrowed an animal and went home. Much to my disgust, I found that no one at camp had worried about me at all. They said I was always in the habit of bringing up somewhere and there was no need of their worrying. That was all the consolation I got.

It was the tenth of February, the snow was gone again and the woods near our house were filled with birds, an almost certain sign that spring was with us and that we need look for but little more winter. The birds that seemed to be the most numerous were the cardinal birds, which have a very sweet note and are quite highly prized among bird fanciers. This bird gets its name from its beautiful red color. Then there was a variety of blue bird, and oh, how blue it was! We tried to catch some of them, but had to give it up, and conclude that as bird-catchers we were not a success.

Later the robins and mocking-birds came, the latter filling the air with their melody. If we could only have dug some horse-radish, how home-like it would have seemed and what a relish it would have been with our meals. I think we mentioned it a number of times.

What few of our cattle we saw looked quite well, and we were informed that if March would come and go without any freezing rains and sleet, that they would get through nicely. We hoped for the best, all the time trying to look on the brightest side.

CHAPTER XV.

TOWARDS the latter part of February the Medicine Lodge people proposed to have an old-fashioned barbecue and ball, in honor of a reunion of settlers who came there as early as 1874. Many later ones were invited, and among them I was included. I accepted the invitation for two reasons: It gave me an opportunity to take a young man to Medicine, who had been our guest for a while, and also to procure some harness and a few other articles, which the "Lodge" could best supply of any town in Barber County.

Upon arrival there I left my six-shooter at the harness-shop until starting for home the next day, and perhaps it was a good thing in the light of later events. The day passed off with pleasant festivities and a general jolly time all around. At night the ball was given in a small hall, which was packed.

The spirits, or a variety of them, began to work about the time the ball was well under way, and it was certainly quite lively, or seemed so to me. There were three or four men to every woman, and the hurrying and scurrying for partners was certainly very amusing. I was kept well supplied as a rule, and it was especially the case when a waltz was called, as they were not so well patronized as the square-dances. I was introduced to a young lady from Bitter Creek, not the same stream that bad man came from, but a similar one after all; and she proved to be an excellent round-dancer—indeed we got along so well together, that during the evening I waltzed with her five times. At the termination of the fifth waltz, a cowboy unceremoniously presented a six-shooter in close proximity to my nose, and inquired if I had not danced with that young lady about enough for one evening. I allowed I had, and feeling a trifle weary anyway, shortly took my departure for the hotel. Two or three of the Medicine Lodge boys followed me out, and said, "Why didn't you shoot that fellow who called you down?" I answered, "I didn't have on my gun." Then they said, "Why didn't you hit him or do something to start a row? There would have been one of the prettiest shooting-matches you ever saw. He belongs to the Sun City crowd, and we are just spoiling for a bout with them." I said, "Suppose I had precipitated a row in there and been shot, as I naturally would have been, first, where would I come in for the fun or glory?"

They answered, "You would have had to take your chance along with the balance of us."

The next morning I said to two or three of the boys, "I shall be flattered by invitations to your dances in the future, but don't look for me to come; my frame won't stand so much excitement."

I had already been in regular dance-halls and seen one or more gun-plays that meant business, and I wasn't taken with that form of entertainment; besides, a heavy Colt's makes so much noise in a hall it jars on my sensitive organization. I perhaps could put up with the dancing part all right, but some of the other frontier luxuries I could excuse. They were never really necessary at any of their numerous balls and parties, and no doubt rarely took place. I refer to the shooting part, denominated as luxuries. I recall with great pleasure the treatment the "Yorkers," as they called us, received, but in future I usually remained away from festivities.

Shortly after my return from Medicine, we had a call from a neighbor of ours, who lived about twenty miles south of us, was proud of his Kentucky lineage and Southern proclivities, and was still against the Government. The war just about cleaned him out, drove him from his ancestral halls, and Uncle Sam had forgotten to make good his losses. He only mentioned the facts to us in a joking way, and the war was over so far as we were personally concerned; so when the jolly and talkative Confederate, Colonel C——, referred to old war times, we laughed and joked with him, and his sallies of wit against the North were all in the play, or at least so taken by us. We were glad to greet the Colonel, and as he was a gallant talker with that Southern air and accent which would fit him so well in "Alabama," or some similar play, we enjoyed hearing him.

Coming from a bit farther south, he brought along some Indian rumors, which fortunately never materialized. He had good reason to remember the raid of the previous fall, when his nephew was among the killed at his own ranch, with one or two others, and only for the absence of himself and family, they would have met a like fate. The Colonel seemed anxious for us to take up our abode in his neighborhood, saying, "There is range enough for us all." The offer was tempting, but we declined. On a future occasion I visited him, however, and we were friends for a number of years.

In order to still more improve our place, John and I devoted three days to building a hen-coop—not adding so much to the attractiveness as to the utility. The special style of its architecture is out of the range of my knowledge; I only know that it was part dug-out and part slabs and logs. It may have been lacking in beauty, but it had plenty of strength.

We started quite a number of undertakings, planning for fields of grain, a garden, ponds of water and many other things, which never did materialize for reasons told later. That winter went on record in that section as the most severe since '71, and yet the loss on cattle that went into the winter in good fix, was reported as small. Of course that kind of talk was very pleasant to our ears, but we felt more sure of its truth after our cattle were gathered and counted.

I made arrangements once or twice to go after a small herd of buffalo, reported to be southwest of us, but they never came to anything; and the animals were either killed by others, or wandered a long distance southwest, for we never heard of them more. A herd of antelope passed by our place, going north, but we didn't get after them in time, so lost that opportunity too.

At this time a letter written to my father will explain the condition of affairs better than any notes, and I append it:

HOME, March 2, 1879.

"DEAR FATHER—A few lines from your youngest may serve to entertain you for a leisure moment; hence I write. We call this home, and if we knew no other and better, it might, indeed, be symbolical to us of all that sweet word contains. For to-day's sunshine pours down its warm rays upon a quiet, orderly, contented household. The cattle are either feeding, or switching off the flies, or licking their sides, thereby manifesting their good feelings and apparently thankful that the sharp winds of the two preceding days have been superseded by such a lovely atmosphere as we are enjoying. Even the pigs, busy in unearthing the succulent roots which this fertile soil nourishes in its bosom, give vent to their satisfaction by noisy demonstrations of their peculiar kind; while the fowls are busy filling their bills, making easy collections, and their cluck, cluck of perfect contentment shows that "all's well" with them. Our sleek-looking dogs lie basking in the sun, apparently never once thinking of the morrow, but happy, contented and in perfect harmony with nature and her surroundings in this little world of ours. Three days ago, this quiet was broken in upon, in rather a startling manner. A cowboy friend of ours rode rapidly to the house and yelled to us in loud tones, 'Boys, boys, your range is all on fire.' Then one might have seen bustle and activity. Horses were run in, old bags and sacks hastily collected, a hustling on of boots and spurs, horses saddled, a yell to our beasts, the creek cleared at a single bound, and we were up the hill the other side, away at a breakneck pace. In a town the cry of fire rouses the excitable in one to a wonderful degree, and all is bustle and activity, with the often sure prospect of averting loss and saving property. But here the puny efforts of man are nearly always as abortive as would be a feather's effort against a whirlwind. After the fire sweeps by, it leaves a picture of blackness, desolation, and even death. The manner in which our streams and cañons run, proved our salvation and saved a large bit of range for us, while miles upon miles south and west of us present a most cheerless aspect to a stockman. If the wind be not blowing too hard, it is possible, by very severe labor, taking gunny-sacks or old cloths of any kind, to beat out a prairie fire, and many a one is put out in that way. But when the wind is sweeping over the prairie a perfect gale, as it was in our case, the labor of man is ineffectual. Nevertheless, we worked manfully and fought well, completely prostrating all of us, and yet all to no purpose as far as we are concerned; for a creek and ravine, which the fire could not leap across, put a check to the progress of the flames in our direction, leaving us thousands of acres of grass. The old grass burned off, will come up much sooner in the spring and help to make early range, a thing quite to be desired. The raging, leaping body of fire was a glorious sight, and I would like the ability to portray it. The flames seemed to be impelled by some terrible and unseen power, lapping up acre after acre of buffalo and blue-stem grass with astonishing avidity. Sometimes, while burning over the buffalo grass, the flames would only be a foot or two in height; then when they seized on the blue-stem, the air would be one glittering mass eight or ten feet high. It swept along very rapidly, and once my horse and I came very near being badly scorched, for we were nearly surrounded by the flames and the animal was so panic-stricken I could not make him move with whip or spur; but Bills, seeing my dilemma, ran to my assistance, by hitting him a tremendous whack with a mop-stick he had in his hand, taking the beast so by surprise that we just went flying. The grass in this section burns readily right early in the spring. A few days of sunshine and it is dried like tinder. If the fire burns one's range in the spring it is not so serious a matter, as green grass soon makes its appearance; but when a range gets burned off in the fall, then the stockman must move his cattle, perhaps a long distance, and pay extra for the grass besides. Next year we intend to plow out good satisfactory fire-guards, taking every precaution, all of which we had no time to do this past year. We are now about beginning our farming and gardening, having already plowed a half-dozen acres. We hope to get our farming well advanced by the time for the spring round-up, for then we shall be very busy getting our cattle together, close-herding, branding calves, and doing many other things incident to the business. Our prospects seem very bright and we have occasion to thank Dame Fortune in many ways. None of us have suffered to any particular extent from sickness or broken bones. We have, indeed, been healthy, and our digestion equal to our appetites. We have only lost one cow by death, that we know of; neither have we lost any horses or had any stolen. We have been cheated some, but that was where we were getting the experience, while the other parties were getting the money. We have had a good bit of practice in many directions, and feel ourselves quite equal to any emergency now.

"I sincerely hope these few lines will find you in the enjoyment of good health, and if you will just drop out here, paying this camp a visit, we will give you an insight into the cow-punching business.

"Your aff. son, BEN."

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM the latter part of February to the middle of March we had delightful weather, with the exception of one day when we were obliged to don our coats, making a slight effort to keep warm. We had another prairie fire, but it did little damage, and already the green grass was springing up in the draws, timber and sheltered nooks.

I was taking considerable interest in my fowls, that is, I was trying to interest them in laying. They did well enough, all but supplying us with eggs; they seemed a trifle slack about that, and probably it was my fault. Either I didn't urge them enough, or else they didn't get sufficient fresh meat and lime. Oh, dear! we were a long distance from market and oyster-shells! I thought if I get an occasional egg we'll have to be satisfied.

They had a little excitement at the "Lodge" the other day, that was not down on the bill-boards. The editor of the only sheet the town boasted, did not conduct himself quite as a good citizen should, so they just took him out, tarred, feathered and dismissed him. They wanted to know if I had any friend in the East who would like to purchase and run the paper. I wrote a friend of mine in the newspaper business, and detailed the many advantages connected with such a deal, mentioned what a healthy country it was, and incidentally told what they did with the other editor. He was quite taken with the proposition, except their method of disposing of editors; and wrote that after thinking the matter over carefully, he had concluded not to make any change. In the East the climate had always agreed with him first-rate, and he was fearful lest the prairie air might have too much ozone in it. I did not correspond with any more friends concerning the matter, and believe they shortly secured some one to their liking, or at least some one who answered the purpose. Of course an editor who would suit all must be made from different clay from that which is generally used in their construction, and I suppose that is the reason there is usually more than one editor in a town. One can write one thing, and the other can write exactly the opposite. There being but two sides to a question, all are suited.

Our farming had fairly begun and we hoped to have it well under way by the middle or latter part of April, when we expected the round-up to begin with a world of hard riding and no let-up on the poor horses; that was what they said, and it was about so.

I shouldered my gun and took a long ramble to see if I could kill some game, using one shoulder going out, and both returning, a gun over one and a twenty-pound gobbler over the other. It was an immense day's work, but it was great fun, and the lug home with a walk of over five miles, was made without a murmur. I saw that bird a long distance away, and by detours that took a couple of miles, I headed him and waited on him. He came just right for me, and the shot was not difficult. The hardest part was getting near enough to him and getting him home. Bills made a dressing for him out of dried biscuits and canned cove oysters, and very fine it all tasted. I don't recall to have eaten any of that particular kind of dressing in the East, but I can heartily recommend it, and some day mean to try it again, though the conditions would all have to be similar.

Our hens were unburdening themselves now of about five eggs daily and we were still looking for increase. We calculated on raising one or two hundred chickens if the polecats, wildcats and other denizens of the forests would only feed elsewhere.

We entertained a great deal of company, and it was by no means difficult, for we did as most other cow-camp people did, let them entertain themselves.

We were hearing and reading a great deal about the new mining town of Leadville, and we were talking some of hooking up in the summer, when the cattle should be quiet, and driving up there. It was only a matter of about six hundred miles. However, I presumed our plan would fall through, as occasionally plans do. If we should pay proper attention to the cattle and all connected therewith, our hands would be full and our time well occupied—and it was, mostly.

A cat came to us unasked, and proved a great comfort. In the evening, besides being on our knees and shoulders, she invariably occupied a small portion of the bed, sleeping between us. I remember how sweetly and peacefully we slept, and now am not surprised that a nervous person can take a cat to bed with them, warding off nervousness and resting well. I read in a paper only a short time ago that a cat was a great sleep-producer, and as I look back on those well-slept nights, am prepared to believe the truth of the article. Of course, in our business we may have been a trifle tired, and good digestion and sound sleep would come naturally, but at any rate I quite favor the cat, and shall try it before bromide.

While strolling along the creek with my gun, keeping my weather-eye out for game, I ran across a mallard duck and killed it. There were two, but I only succeeded in getting one. Wild ducks were a luxury and a rarity with us, the boys getting a few down on the Medicine River; but there was so little water in our locality, we seldom saw them. The spring, so far, had opened out rather bad for farming, but first-rate for stock. We had such a small number of cattle, it seemed as if we must do some farming to help eke out the profits. Large holders of cattle, we were informed, paid no attention to the soil, except to get where there was plenty of grass and water; but we were not large holders, and could not go on such a scale as they could. Maybe we might grow—there was certainly room. If worst came to worst and it didn't rain at all, the grass would start, as there was so much snow, and there was still some moisture at the roots; besides, it took very little for the wild varieties. It had been very fortunate that such was the case, on account of the immense number of cattle the plains of Kansas and the Territory had pastured, and for which they still were to be a favorite grazing-ground.

The robins had nearly all gone north, and our summer visitors of the feathery tribe were nearly all arrived. If we missed one variety of bird we got another, and there was no lack of music in our grove. The month of March passed beautifully, so far as weather was concerned, and for health and enjoyment in a manner different from any other March I ever saw or have ever seen since. Only one chilly day—not a flake of snow or drop of rain during the month; our front door was not closed an hour in the twenty-four, and the weather practically like summer, without any moisture. The month was about ended, and we had passed through two stages of fear—first being afraid it would rain, and then we were afraid it wouldn't; and it didn't. There was plenty of time yet for a little moisture to give us grass, but I feared our vegetables would not materialize.

I made a sore on my hands splitting rails. Probably I was trying for a record, or to emulate that great man who never took a back seat for any one—splitting rails or in brain-work either. I never came near the example mentioned, either in rail-splitting or anything else. If I am able to appreciate him, it is sufficient for me.

Being partially disabled, I was detailed to go for the mail and do light housekeeping. I believe that is what they call it when they take their meals out, buying the other necessaries of the grocer and baker in other words, when they occasionally feed the fire and boil the coffee and tea. That was about the extent of my duties.

Next to the destruction of our melon patch by that greedy cow (she died finally, I think because we treated her so coolly), I name another calamity. Our dog Fannie and her four beautiful white pointer puppies succumbed to poison, which was put out by a neighbor for destroying wolves; and our dogs got the wolves' share of it. We didn't cry but we mourned, and it was a sad camp for a day or so. Indeed, we grieved for many a day, but didn't refer to it very much—we had so much to occupy our minds. The hunting season was over until another fall; and she could be replaced, partially at least; so we didn't waste as much sympathy on her as we otherwise would have done. I have owned and shot over very many dogs; perhaps a few of them were as good, but none of them were better than Fannie. I bought two of the same name afterwards, but changed it—on the grounds of sentiment, I suppose. It was fortunate for all concerned that we did not learn who poisoned her, for, even if it were carelessness, it was little short of criminal; and we should have so considered it. For a person who will intentionally poison any one's healthy dog, I can think of no language strong enough in which to express my contempt and disgust. We still had one dog and puppy left, but we paid little attention to them, except by giving them all they wanted to eat; and they were satisfied.

CHAPTER XVII.

WITHOUT any rain at all, the grass was showing up bright and green on the burnt ground, but as it was very thin it made the horses restless, causing them to travel in search of better feeding-ground. One of them traveled so far that he got lost, and after a few days' search around the neighborhood, we learned that he had been seen about seventy-five miles away. John at once set out after him, and got him, showing how useful the brand was in identifying our animals.

The glib-tongued Kentuckian, Colonel C——, with his "Yis, sah," and "By the Eternal, sah!" stopped overnight with us, and in the morning invited us for a drive over to Sun City with him. I accepted and away we went. The Colonel drove rapidly, the day was warm, and we reached Sun City with a sick horse. Such doctoring I never saw before or since. The majority of the citizens turned out to help doctor the beast. At least a dozen different remedies were recommended, and nearly all were tried. It was impossible to tell whether any of them benefited the animal. The Colonel laughed, joked, treated the crowd all around, said he believed now the horse would die, but he was going to try the remedies proposed if it crippled a drug-store. He hired a horse to hook up with his well one, and took me over to camp. The next morning he proposed that I should take one of our horses and go down with him to his camp, and I accepted. We had a delightful drive, reaching his ranch in time for dinner. His buildings were principally dug-outs, of which there were three, and the finest I ever saw. On the inside they were lined with split cedar-logs, which gave them a very pretty appearance. He had some very good furniture, and with some of the accessories of civilization, they looked quite homelike. His family were pleasant, the meals excellent, and I enjoyed my twenty-four hours' stay amazingly. The Colonel pointed out the spot where his nephew was killed in the Indian raid of the fall before; and said that rumors from below of dissatisfaction among the redskins led people to believe that in a very few weeks there would be another raid, that they would start northward, robbing and killing as soon as there was plenty of new grass for their horses. His family were very much worried and were thinking of going to the settlement for some weeks, which they did shortly after.

The Colonel took me home, found his horse recovered at Sun City, and everything came out all right. Talking the matter over at camp, we all concluded it was one of the most remarkable recoveries on record, and was certainly entitled to a prominent place in veterinary *materia medica*.

About this time there were reported remarkable gold discoveries near Wichita. Either they must have had in their eyes one of those famous crops of golden wheat and corn for which Sedgwick County was so noted, or else had already begun to plan for the boom which later gave Wichita such a reputation and caused her or some of her quick residents to build street-car lines and homes so far out in the country. The gold craze did not affect us, for we had cattle on the brain too strong to be dislodged.

A couple of antelope were reported in the little flat between the sand-hills, so John and I armed and tried a hand. We made a great detour, each getting a couple of shots. The result was, one antelope hit by both of us. Once more our camp was supplied for a short period with fresh meat, which we could easily carry back on a horse. Many people were traveling, and most of them asking employment just before round-up time. Now we were having even more company than in the winter. Then an occasional cowboy or hunter dropped in on us, and many were the post-haulers and bone-haulers we fed and furnished with supplies free gratis. Those men would come by twos and threes from up about the railroad, all the way from one hundred to one hundred and forty miles. They came principally to get what is known as "Kansas wheat," or buffalo bones. Their trip would occupy them from ten days to two weeks, and after reaching the Santa Fé road with their loads, they would rarely get as high as ten dollars for twenty-five to thirty hundred pounds. A season of poor crops in Southern and Middle Kansas was sure to send down to the Territory plenty of bone and wood-haulers. Men bought the bones at different points along the railroad, shipped them to St. Louis, where, I was informed, they were used for refining sugar.

The woodmen split and hauled cedar-posts from out of the cañons, receiving eight and ten cents a-piece for them. Where bones were tolerably plentiful, it seemed to me to be the easier task. But we fed a great many people, and were due to feed plenty more.

Our larder was running low and needed re-stocking. We needed some wire for fencing purposes, and a number of other things which we thought could be procured at the railroad. So George C—— and I determined to set out, and we thought best to try Hutchinson, as it seemed a little nearer, or perhaps a little newer, than Wichita. About the time we set out on our trip, our man, John C——, started with a round-up party, which was going to begin work about one hundred miles southwest. As we moved along on our road north, camping by the way, we passed through some fine farming-lands in Barber and adjacent counties; but it was all dry, very dry—no showing for crops—and looked suspiciously like the "Great American Desert," of which it was always considered a part. Deserts as a rule are not supposed to be covered with grass; this was, however, and the name took its departure. Many a family have turned their sorrowing heads eastward, cursing the day they left a section where something could be raised besides prairie grass.

We reached Hutchinson after a three days' drive, where the steam-whistle and other noises of a bustling town sounded very good. I went down to the station to see a train arrive from the East. While looking at the cars and travelers going West, a man stepped from the train and said, "You are Miller from Binghamton, and what on earth are you doing here?" I answered, "Just growing up with the country, and glad to meet some one from B——." I advised him not to go much farther West unless he were going to mine. He said he was only prospecting. The train whistled and away he went. My thoughts went East for a brief period, only to return to prosy groceries and the like.

We secured a load which weighed a trifle over twenty-five hundred pounds, took a parting glass of cool beer, mounted upon our spring-seat, and were off. After leaving the outskirts of the town, we had still a half-mile pull through the sand before the bridge across the Arkansas River was reached. That particular pull through six inches of solid sand, shall I ever forget it? No, not while time lasts with me.

The sun was shining brightly, its rays beating on that bed of sand and making it scorching hot in spite of the terrific gale, for it blew so hard we could scarcely hear each other talk. By great effort on our part we got the horses along until within three or four hundred feet of the bridge, and there was a slight rise, with the sand still at the same depth. Right there we stuck. The bulk of that load, consisting of all sorts of articles, had to be carried by us onto the bridge, right in the teeth of that gale. George was going with a load that made him a trifle top-heavy, so that he blew over. He managed to get on his feet again, and yelled loudly to me, "This wind blows so that I am almost a fool." Mad as a man ever should be, I remarked in an equally loud tone, "There are a pair of us."

With the wagon on the bridge, reloaded, our spirits rose, while a little cool beer washed the sand from our throats, so that we almost forgot the wind as we drove across the river and saw the hard road on the other side. We were on a well-traveled trail, which was worn smooth and even, so our horses moved easily up a gentle ascent, and we forgot our late unpleasantness, engaging in a merry talk.

After going about four miles beyond the bridge, we drove into the yard of a man we had met on the range, proposing to water our team. He came out and greeted us, and immediately asked, "Where is your right hind-tire? You are driving the wheel on its rim." We admitted not having noticed its absence, and I said, "I'll just run back a short distance and get it." I started back that short distance, and by the time it was found I had walked three miles and a half, being down the hill not far from the bridge leading south from Hutchinson. I started back in good faith, rolling that great heavy tire. A little over a quarter of a mile of that work, after all that had gone before, wore me out, so I curled up in a buffalo-wallow, inside the tire, for a little rest. The hot sun made no difference with me, and my eyes were soon closed in sleep. A couple of hours elapsed, and George, getting worried, came loping along on old "Whitey," yelling like a Comanche Indian. The noise awoke me with a start. We had a good laugh, loaded the horse with the tire and walked to our friend's place. It took the balance of the afternoon for the farmers to set the tire, which they did by putting leathers, in the form of washers, at the ends of the felloes. We stopped for the night, slept in the barn, ate our own lunch, making as little extra trouble as possible. We had been wishing for rain. It came in the night, and, under a leaky roof, interfered somewhat with our sleep. It wasn't the water which bothered us so much, but it seemed as if the barn must be struck by lightning, which was vivid and continuous.

From that time on home we had no more trouble with dry wheels—but how the mud did bother us! Calculating on a four days' pull from Hutchinson to camp, we were rather disappointed to be out seven days. Probably we ought to have been glad to get home at all. Depending quite a bit on our own exertions, we didn't give much time to giving thanks for anything, but just kept right on grinning and grubbing.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IT was the first day of May, and a lovely one. The boys were saying that we had just enjoyed three consecutive months of the finest weather they had ever experienced, and then the season of our suffering set in. Insects of all descriptions were flocking in our district from different parts of the country, gloating over us in anticipation of their coming feast. The working bedbugs had initiated their campaign so that Billy W—— had been driven nearly frantic for a week, and in that length of time had changed the location of his bed fully five times; but all to no purpose, for the villains still pursued him, and were getting their work in on the balance of us at the same time.

One day we constructed a new bed, set the standards in tins of water, moving away from the wall; and then we were going to laugh until some ingenious bug should tell the others to drop down on us from the ceiling, and then we would try and invent something else for their careful consideration.

The day following was mail-day. George was to go to the post-office, and I plowed all day long. In ten days we hoped to get our fence up, ground prepared, millet sown and cattle gathered. Then we proposed to lay off, kill bugs, outwit mosquitoes and other noxious insects and vermin generally. Our cook, Bills, went to the round-up with John C——, and Billy W—— was chief cook. His wheat bread, corn bread and biscuits were the pride of our camp, so we kept him very busy, for our appetites were something wonderful to behold.

Just one year before, George and I had landed in Wichita with a quantity of old clothes and two dogs. Out of the whole business we had ourselves and one dog left; the clothes and other dog were gone, changed into atoms of another kind. We were speaking of the year just passed, and after the usual amount of joking, seriously remarked that it had been a year of many lessons to us, productive of much good, a vast deal of experience, and the most satisfactory one of our lives. Our bodies had certainly been greatly strengthened and benefited, while our minds had not rusted to speak of.

By the fifth of May some of our cattle began to arrive, sent along by John, together with a bunch belonging to some neighbors. We separated them, and proceeded to hold ours close on our own range. The grass was fine, and the cattle looked well. We held them tolerably ose during the day, drove them into our corral at night, and in the orning we were up, through breakfast, and had them out grazing efore five o'clock. It made a long day, was very close work, and that enning the cattle at night was contrary to their natures and raising, nd did not do them any good. That method of grazing cattle and eeping them from grass at night was equally hard on the herder. I st fifteen pounds in two weeks, and once more my cheek-bones were owing.

The cattle were nearly all in now, making a fine display with about ne hundred and fifty calves. Our herd was growing, and looked very ne for a small bunch.

Once more I struck out for Wichita, which I reached by stage om Sun City, this time to purchase a few thoroughbred bulls. I ccomplished it satisfactorily, and got back to camp completely worn ut. While in Wichita I met some army officers in camp with their oops there, awaiting orders to drive cattlemen out of the Territory. was some years before such orders were ever carried out. It was my rst introduction to the regular army or any part of it, but the acquaint- nce did not end there.

I had a delightful visit in Wichita and, of course, remained longer han the dictates of my conscience indicated. However, I notice, as a ule, that young America isn't paying much attention to conscience hen it competes directly with pleasure. We are a sentimental lot of oung people, always ready with an excuse; and our elders are no better, nly a trifle further along on the same trail.

After finishing satisfactorily in Wichita the small amount of busi- ess and large amount of fun, I started for camp once more and a quiet fe. I caught a ride to the Lodge with a teamster, and reached home y easy stages. After all our fuss and feathers over a ranch and range or which we paid dearly, we learned that so far as we were concerned was almost valueless. There was a fine spring and stream of water, a olerable house and a pretty grove, with summer grass for a very small unch of cattle. It took us just a year to learn that it wasn't what we eeded at all, but the money paid for the ranch was a fair investment, that it gave us a foothold in a section of country adjacent to the reat cattle range of the Southwest, and a sort of standing among the en engaged in the business we were following. Further than that, he ranch or claim was almost valueless to us. We did afterwards trade for a sort of a horse, and that died.

After I reached camp from Wichita we decided to move our cattle outhwest into the Nation, into a full-fledged cattle country. Our man, ohn C——, saw one or two vacant spots where he thought we could edge in, if we hurried. It didn't take long to pack our necessaries into a wagon, and away went George, John, Bills and the cattle, leaving two mournful creatures at the old stand. Our crop was a failure, our garden an ash-heap, our fences and corral dilapidated, our cottonwood house badly warped and almost untenantable; only three hens and half a dozen chickens left, the bulk of them having gone to feed the wild animals near by.

Billy and I constructed a board hammock, and swung it in front of the house, between the two giant walnuts. Covering it entirely with mosquito-bar, we retired for the night with perfect confidence in our ability to sleep, unless it should rain. An almost cloudless sky gave us confidence that our nights would be restful. One night, however, it was different, and with the rain deluging us and our blankets, we hurried into the house, where the balance of the night was spent in talking, most of it scolding, and general discomfort. Fortunately we only experienced three or four stormy nights the whole summer. Young turkeys were getting ripe, large enough to eat, and I killed three of the foolish birds. What a delightful change and luxury from fried bacon and fried mush. If there is any better eating than a young, wild turkey, about one-quarter grown, I have failed to taste it. In all my experience and wanderings in Southern Kansas and the Indian Territory, I never saw but one turkey on her nest. We discovered one by the side of the path leading down our creek, not over a quarter of a mile below our house, in a thick brush-patch. We frightened her from the nest once, and counted a dozen eggs. Afterwards in walking by the place we were careful not to look, in order not to frighten her. In due time she hatched out eleven young ones, and before fall, I am ashamed to confess, we killed nine of them.

Our garden being a fizzle, George, who had returned, and I concluded to go over some distance on the Medicine River to buy some vegetables. We didn't get as early a start as we intended, owing almost entirely to the notions of our new horse. He was not ready to go as soon as we were. Whenever he was hitched up it took him a half-hour to go through his ring performances before starting. They consisted of an apparent effort to climb towards the stars, to fall back on the wagon, get astride of the tongue, to get on the back of the other horse, to get tangled up in the harness, and end by falling down. Then we took a hand in the game, and while one sat on the brute's head, the other untangled the harness; the animal got up, and away we went. The ring performance didn't vex us much, but the remarks of our partner at the time were tantalizing, and really won't bear repeating. We got our revenge later, as the same animal got wound up in his picket-rope and burned his legs, so that we had the rather sorry pleasure of shooting him.

By the time we reached Sun City the rain was pouring in sheets, and the river was a torrent. We drove in and crossed it just the same, no part of the outfit having to swim except the horses and wagon. An Englishman down the river a few miles was reported as having some vegetables. The man was found, but no green food except six little stunted cabbages. It took forty miles of travel in a drenching rain to get them. We made no further effort in that direction, and had to content ourselves with dry provisions.

Time hung heavy keeping the ranch, with nothing else to do, especially in such intensely warm weather, with its numerous accompaniments and annoyances. We had absolutely nothing to do except to eat, read and sleep. We were not built to continue long in such extremely quiet occupations without complaining, and there was considerable of that done.

CHAPTER XIX.

A LETTER written about this time to a friend in the East, seems to me to explain our situation very well:

"RANCH, August 27th, 1879.

"MY DEAR JOE: Prepare to sympathize! Prepare to listen to a doleful tale; nothing serious but very aggravating. Our team is away and is long past due. George took provisions down to the boys with the herd, and was to be back in six or seven days, but it is now ten days without any sign of him, and we are anxious for our mail. We have no horse, and except for the cow, are practically on foot. She oughtn't to be, for her forelegs are tied together, but her hobbles seem to make no difference, for I found her eight miles down the creek yesterday and still going. Consequently, I didn't milk her as early as usual, and only once that day. Walking eight miles after a cow, to get milk for breakfast, as I did, rather runs that meal over into dinner. My partner took my return with a great deal of nonchalance. Rising in the hammock, where he was reading a novel, he said: 'You have her, I see. Milk, and let us have some breakfast.' Nothing more was said; such cheek was stupefying. Being especially anxious for the mail, we hired a neighbor to go after it, and looked forward the whole day to his return, with joyful anticipations. Night came and we were disappointed. The next morning after, the man came and brought us three or four papers. It was the smallest, meanest little bit of mail we ever received in Kansas. We are completely lost without a horse, and have thought of breaking the old cow to ride, but are afraid it will impair her milking qualities, and we cannot spare any milk, for it is now the best part of our living. We expected to start for Dodge City to look into the prospects for fall cattle, but for some unaccountable reason George doesn't come back with the team, and we are a little bit worried. All the day long, outside of hunting and milking that solitary cow, we have nothing to do but fight flies and contend with the heat. We have little or nothing to read, and about the same to eat. One thing we do nearly have, and that is the blues. We wonder if on some accounts, a great, large, cool prison with company and plenty to eat, would not be preferable to our present existence? We have read all the advertisements in every old newspaper and magazine on the place, have tried all sorts of amusements, but in vain. We cannot get away from the ranch or from ourselves. For days and days our bill of fare has consisted of mush and milk for dinner, fried mush and tea for supper, and mush and coffee for breakfast. That fare is all right for a few meals, but ten or twelve successive days of it is different. In spite of the heat and distance, I would set out on foot for a town, but we look for George or some one from camp hourly, and so deem it best for me not to go away. At this time while almost at our wits' end about what to do, and while silently musing, the familiar little whistling noise made by turkeys while feeding is heard, and looking south from the house, we discover a bunch of twenty of the birds in our old corral, entirely unconscious of danger. But it lurks in their immediate neighborhood. The lay of the land is excellent for approach, and in five minutes from the time the game is first sighted, we have five of the beautiful birds fluttering on the ground. We are happy once more, and what a little thing has caused the change. These stomachs of ours are the governors that control our systems, no matter who or what we are. Of course, I refer entirely to the male sex.

"The other evening I sat by the table reading some advertisements, and Billy was dozing in the hammock under the trees, when the dogs set up a terrific barking. I listened to it for quite a while before turning down the light, but finally became convinced that something was wrong, or the dogs had gone wild. I stepped to the door and called Billy but received no answer. I waited it seemed to me a long time, and the racket kept up. Suddenly Billy jumped out of the hammock and ran into the house, blew out the light, and said, 'Ben, there is something wrong; get your guns.' We armed and prepared for war. With our weapons handy—forty shots in all—we felt better. My partner said: 'I saw a man skulking by the creek, and he is so still about it, he is here for no good.' We called to whoever it might be, to come up to the house and let us see him or them. Waxing facetious, we yelled out in the darkness: 'Whoever you may be, you had better show up and state your business; these are not exactly office hours with us, but still if you have anything to say, or of importance to communicate, proceed, and right away too, for in about a minute and a half we will make you think we are joint owners and managers of a lead-mine and powder-mill in active operation.' No answer. We opened fire with our six-shooters, sending a dozen shots in the direction he was going when Billy saw him. No shots in return, and the dogs quieted. We should have rested on our arms the balance of the night, only we couldn't. The mosquitoes and our fright would not let us. We lay sprawled on the floor with weapons in hand, and a miserable night we passed. At the break of day we arose and looked into two swollen and disfigured faces. We were still frightened, for a rumor had reached us only the day before, that three hundred Indians had broken away from the reservation and were on the war-path. There was another rumor that a band of horse-thieves was working in our vicinity. It was supposed that we had money with which to buy cattle, as we were talking Dodge City once more. Bearing these few matters in mind, our feelings that morning were not of the most pleasant description. As we got into position for defense, before inspecting very much, the propensity to joke was not quite scared out of us. I remarked to Billy: 'I am so terrified my appetite is all gone; even mush would not tempt me.' As the light was plain enough to show my partner's grim visage, I could see a faint smile lighting it up, as he replied, 'A little bologna, rye bread and a glass of cool beer wouldn't be bad,' though to be candid he did not feel any of the pangs of hunger. Then he said: 'Ben, take off your shoes, and don't make so much noise moving around.' I replied; 'I put on clean socks yesterday, and don't want to get them all dusty.' As soon as it became perfectly light and we discovered no one, we went out, and there sure enough were fresh tracks of a man, leading off down the creek, and we didn't follow either. There might have been more than one. Before the day was ended our scare was over, and we gave the matter little more thought until a few days afterward, when some one told us that three strange men were seen on our creek the same day of our scare. It is probable they didn't want us, for if they had, we no doubt would have been easy game, day or night. Strangers moving around in our section were marked and kept track of, almost equal to those in the Cherokee country, where nearly every one's business and intentions are learned, or at least inquired about. I must close now, with regards to inquiring friends.

"Yours, BEN."

A day or two after this occurrence, while waiting for George, who should put in an appearance but our herder John, who told us George had been sick, that the cattle were all right, and that he wanted us to make preparations, lock up the house and take a drive down to camp with him, look at the cattle and decide on future operations. George sent us a ten-page letter, praised to the skies the country where our cattle were, told of all its advantages, and ended by saying, "Don't wait at all, but come right down and see for yourselves." If it should all pan out as he indicated, we thought a move on our part advisable and we would go, paying little or no attention to our present location.

We started off on our hundred-mile ride all life and animation, and reached the camp in two and a half days, pleased to see George, the cattle and the summer camp. It was about as the boys had described it, and was immensely satisfactory. The camp was located about twenty-eight miles southwest of Anthony, Kansas, in the Indian Territory, twelve or fifteen miles below the Kansas line. It was quite a level country, both a summer and winter range, with quantities of water. While we had neighbors close by, we didn't seem to be intruding on anyone, so we decided it was just the place for us, and the Barber County ranch must be given up. We also gave up our trip to Dodge City, and devoted our attention for the present to the location in the "Nation," where our man John had quietly squatted with our cattle, without so much as asking any man's leave. We passed three or four days at the new camp, which consisted of nothing but a tent and a rope corral, a few provisions, cooking utensils and blankets. We watched with pleasure the ease with which the cattle were handled, for they almost handled themselves. We saw how they were slowly worked in toward a common center at night, just headed and allowed to graze into about the same piece of land every night, and that constituted what was called "a bed ground." They got so accustomed to the same locality that when night approached and the men started to round them in, it was very little trouble for them to know just what was wanted and went in about the right direction.

We enjoyed the outlook amazingly, and we three partners struck back up into Barber County for the purpose of closing up as nearly as we could, and getting out for good and all. We easily made the one-hundred-mile journey and were back home in three days; went to Lake City for our mail, and on to bid adieu to Medicine Lodge and to make final arrangements for quitting the country.

CHAPTER XX.

It was the eleventh of September, and we had the first shower that cooled the air one particle. It made us cheerful, however, and we said away with bugs and noxious insects, for a little cool weather will cause them to take a few months' vacation.

The old cow gave me a lively chase one morning. I found her out from the house about half a mile and took off her hobbles. She started on a run in an opposite direction from the house, and I was mounted on a great, tall, raw-boned, angular-looking horse that couldn't turn a cow in a mile, and he didn't, either. She led me a rough chase, and it was a wonder the clumsy horse didn't fall and break something, but he didn't. After considerable effort we succeeded in heading the cow and getting her home. A man on a cow-pony could have turned her in a hundred yards, but with an old team-horse it was different. The next day we went over to Lake City for our mail for the last time, and to bid the genial owner of the town good-bye. We left our pleasant location with regret, putting it in the hands of a friend to sell or trade. For more than a year the old cottonwood house sheltered us, and pleasant memories clustered around it, mingled with a few not so agreeable. However, the enjoyable ones stood out in bold relief, and the others were soon forgotten. We looked forward with feelings of pleasure to a dug-out and a huge fireplace that would fairly devour logs. Building that would be a recess between times, while the cattle were quiet. I think the logs were to be mostly cut by John C——, and we would help him place them. Wouldn't it be jolly, we thought, on long winter evenings to sit in the blaze of the crackling logs, eating apples and hickory nuts, and drinking cider. That kind of jollity we never saw; no such good things to eat, no cider to drink, and only the same old cook-stove to sit by.

The day before we had a call from the Mayor of Medicine Lodge and the Physician of the Patrol Guards, an organization watching the border. I killed a couple of young turkeys, and they came just in the nick of time. We had a fine time with our visitors, and they bade us good-bye with regret, expressing their sentiments regarding our change of location by approving, and saying they were sorry to have us go, nevertheless.

By dint of some effort, our traps were packed and our cow tied to the rear-end of our load, and we were off for our new home—a four day's journey with a great deal of bother, both with the team and the cow. The weather held very warm for us, and we stuck a number of times, putting our tempers in miserable shape. But when we pulled through the last row of sand-hills and down beside a newly-built hay-shed on Sand Creek—it was one of those other Sand Creeks—we brightened up a good deal. The stable in which we were to live was a very loosely-constructed affair, and just a trifle better than no shelter.

We now took on the dignity of a name in accordance with our brand, and ours was known as Circle-Bar Ranch, and our man was known as Circle-Bar John, shortened just to Circle-Bar as his regular nickname throughout the neighborhood. Anthony, Kansas, from which our camp was distant some twenty-eight or thirty miles, was our post-office, and we did much of our trading there. We made an arrangement with some pleasant people right at the State line about twelve miles distant to bring our mail to their place, and it saved us many a long ride, besides making a very pleasant stopping-place. There were three or four families of them, holding there small bunches of cattle; they had quite comfortable homes and were very pleasant, sociable people.

Before getting our log-house completed, we got drenched three times. The hay wasn't very thick on the stable-roof, and the water ran through it as if it had been a sieve. They were not ordinary rains, but regular downpours; the heavens opened and the waters tumbled down in heaps. Under such circumstances a person who could keep an unruffled countenance would be a curiosity unexcelled.

At this time we met with a loss which caused me much sorrow. Our partner, Billy W——, concluded to sell out and get into something that would bring him in quicker returns on his money invested, for reasons of his own into which I did not inquire. With great regret at losing him, I bought out his share, feeling that the bargain was a good one for me; selfishness being quite natural, my sorrow was short-lived; although our partner for a year was greatly missed when with us no more. I hooked up the team and hauled him to Caldwell, a distance of forty-five miles. We drove up to the Kansas line, and then followed it due east until we reached the town. While driving along where there was an occasional settlement, we came to a field which consisted of a few acres of watermelons and muskmelons only; the corn hadn't done anything. There was not a house in sight or any sign of one. There was quite a deep ravine or draw about one hundred and fifty yards east of the melons, but we did not discover any evidence of settlement around anywhere; so we concluded to load our nearly empty wagon with those handsome melons, which would have made a darky's eyes glisten, or those of any one else, for that matter. We at once proceeded to load into the wagon, selecting only the finest. Completing our labors and mounting our wagon, we were just about to start when a female head peered up out of the draw, and a shrill voice shrieked out: "You needn't think you are stealing those melons—I have been watching you all the time; but take 'em along with you, and I hope they'll make you sick, that I do." Two more chagrined fellows could not be found, and we turned color for the first time in many a day. Red as our faces were naturally, they became redder; and if ever a person enjoyed another's discomfiture, that woman did ours. We offered to pay her, but she scorned our money, and told us to go along and get out of her sight. We didn't stay longer in that neighborhood, only to take one look at the dug-out under the bank where she lived. We even forgot to ask after her family, and don't know to this day of whom it consisted. Arriving in Caldwell we gave the melons to a few friends, and afterwards told them the joke, and that the "partakers were as bad as the thieves." But that little theft caused us many a laugh and any amount of guying. We were really foolish to tell of it, but it was too rich to keep.

We, or rather I, made the acquaintance of most of the business people, and made headquarters at an outfitting store of two gentlemen, both of whom were afterwards Mayor of Caldwell in her palmy days. Loading up with some supplies, I bade my new-made friends and ex-partner good-bye, setting out for camp. We were always glad to leave camp for town, and always delignted to leave town for camp. Just the same way with our guests; we were always glad to greet them, and always delighted to bid them adieu. No one could ask better treatment than was accorded to us in the towns near by; and I look back with especial pleasure upon our reception in Anthony and Caldwell, where many of the citizens really put themselves out to make our stops pleasant to us. There grew to be an exchange of courtesies between the ranches generally and adjacent cities (for they all had Mayors), that was pleasant alike to all parties.

I very soon discovered that the credit of a cowboy was excellent for amounts of money and articles within reason. While the borrowers may have in some instances taken advantage of the credit system to push it too far, I believe such cases to have been rare. I know they were until the cattle business took a serious tumble. The citizens were always very socially inclined. They invited us to their houses to dinner and to supper, to evening companies, to balls and parties in the hall, and even invited us to attend church. We were not very slow to accept their invitations, and very cordial relations were established. Whenever any of them were in our neighborhood, either for hunting, business or pleasure, our latch-string was always out, and they were perfectly welcome to our humble fare. They kindly protested that it tasted good and was heartily enjoyed. I suspected that their long rides and extra exercise gave them an appetite that even a cow-camp meal could hardly satisfy.

However that might be, we made a great many friends all about the country and among the towns, and the memories of dozens and dozens of those open-hearted, open-handed people will always abide with us.

But I set out from Caldwell with my load, alone on my forty-five-mile drive. The roads were excellent, the weather fine, the team in good spirits, and what more could I ask? I stopped at noon, fed and watered both man and beast, took an hour's lay-off, hooked up again, and away we went over the beautiful prairie roads, trotting along with a moderate load, and with pleasant thoughts quickly passing the time away. I didn't forget the place where the woman said we didn't steal those melons, driving by a little faster than was called for. It struck me as a case of petty larceny, but as the owner of the melons said we were not stealing anything, why, of course, I cannot find it in my heart to contradict her.

Towards night I reached the little settlement on the line where our esteemed neighbors, the Cliffords, the Kriders and the Brokaws, lived. I stopped for a slight exchange of courtesies, for, of course, just coming from town, I was liable to have something in that line to exchange, and we chatted for a short period. I was strongly urged to remain for tea, but it was getting late and I must be off. Did not accept that time, but our refusals were rare.

I reached camp in a couple of hours, and it seemed as if I had been away a week instead of three days. I found the corral for branding purposes nearly finished and considerable activity prevailing there. It was time to brand our calves, and we were also going to put an extra brand on George's share of the cattle, now proposing to have separate brands and paying expenses pro rata, according to the number of cattle.

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CHAPTER XXI.

On one of my trips to Wichita about a year after or a little over, I met an English gentleman by the name of Aldridge, who had come to this country to engage in cattle or sheep. He had been to Australia, intending to go into the sheep business, but it didn't suit him; and returning to England he heard of the prosperity in both lines of business in America, so determined to come here. When I met him in Wichita he had looked up the sheep business in Colorado, found some things about it which didn't suit his ideas, and meeting one or two congenial parties near Newton, Kansas, went in with them and bought some cattle. It was about that time I met him at the Occidental Hotel, and we had a two days' confab and an agreeable time generally. Of course, we parted with mutual expressions of esteem, and I jotted down a note mentally, saying to myself, “If he is a fair sample of all Englishmen, I'm no longer ‘agin 'em.’” [illegible] the ordinary course of events and in the irrepressible struggle to maintain a livelihood for myself and cattle, the Englishman passed clear out of my mind and I actually forgot that such a person ever existed, being not a little ashamed of it later.

A day or two after my return from Caldwell, just after breakfast, while we were smoking and deciding on the day's duties, a rather dilapidated looking stranger rode up and said quietly, “Good-morning, gentlemen.” We answered “Good-morning,” and told him to get down from his horse and have some breakfast. He said he would do it gladly, for provisions were a bit scarce at his camp, and he had come to borrow some coffee and bacon of us. At that he walked up to me, held out his hand and said, “You don't seem to remember me.” I allowed he had rather the best of me, as not a feature of his face was familiar. He said, “Don't you remember Aldridge, whom you met in Wichita about a year ago?” My face looked as blank as a Chinaman's when he doesn't want to understand. Aldridge sort of drew back, saying in a dignified manner, “Don't you remember the Englishman you met at the Occidental Hotel?” A light broke over my countenance; it all came back, and I said, “Well I should remark; are you really Mr. Aldridge?” He demurely replied that the individual was the same, though only a part of him was left.

Then introductions and a great laugh followed, and we flew to attend to his horse and supply the wants of his inner man. The horse looked ready to drop, and he looked the same. Said he had been troubled with malaria, both his cook and general factotum were shaking like frightened curs, his horse had a touch of it, and he believed his cattle would be down with it in a few days. Such quiet, dry remarks were a novelty to us, and we shrieked with laughter, while he only smiled.

In a mild way he told of his trip through from the Cherokee Nation, where he bought his cattle, and it was a journey of great hardship under all the existing conditions. After he had eaten and smoked his pipe, of which Englishmen seem so fond, he took his coffee and bacon, mounted his horse, and away he went, not, however, before he had given us a cordial invitation to call up at his camp.

We proceeded with our usual vocations, one man watching the cattle, the rest splitting rails and cutting logs for our cabin. The next day Mr. Aldridge came down to camp again, and brought, not a thanksgiving offering, but something which simply showed his good will—a piece of venison and a soft-shell turtle—and, of course, he stopped for dinner. The bill-of-fare comprised soft-shell turtle soup for the first course; broiled turtle, roast venison, mallard duck and yams for the second course; for an entrée we had ducks' hearts and livers with raw onions, while for dessert we had wheat bread and coffee.

The killing of the deer was quite an episode. A boy fifteen years old, brother of Mr. Aldridge's right bower, took a shot-gun and walked down the creek a short distance, with two shells in his gun loaded with No. 8 shot. While slipping around in the thick bush to see if he could get a shot at quail, he suddenly came face to face with a deer, not a dozen steps away. Without stopping even to put the gun to his shoulder, the boy held the weapon toward the animal and pulled the trigger. The charge of fine shot went just like a bullet, the distance was so short, and, hitting the deer in a vital spot, killed it instantly. It was the first deer the boy had ever seen near by, and he was greatly elated over his success. Well he might be, for deer are seldom caught napping like that.

We had another pleasant chat with the Englishman, talking about where he should look for a range, but we could not give him much information, as we knew of none which were not already taken. Whether we suggested it, or whether it was proposed by him, I do not know, but we made an arrangement whereby he was to put his cattle, horses and mules in with ours, and stop with us. This, of course, was done for a money consideration, which he seemed very willing to give. So we took another new partner, and a foreigner at that.

Whether he did or not, we never had reason to regret taking him in, and I can say for myself that I was never associated with a more genial, cultured gentleman. We never had any fault to find with our new partner, except on occasions it seemed to us as if he didn't worry enough. When we would all be worried and stirred up over something that hadn't gone just right, he would light his pipe and puff away as stolid and apparently as indifferent as an Indian. It was a trait of character so entirely new to us that we could scarcely understand and much less appreciate it. He was a true Briton in every sense of the word, for, while he loved his government, and the Queen as the nominal head of it, he was never offensive about it, and he never found fault with America. Many and many is the time we all joined together in singing "Britannia Rules the Wave." We had to admit it, for she did then, does now, and will for ages to come, so far as we know.

We didn't gain much when it came to horse-flesh, for Mr. Aldridge's horses were completely played out, but that cut no particular figure, as they had a good long summer ahead of them, with plenty of fine grass and light work. At that time our cook decided to leave us, and pulled out for a fresh field of labor at a larger salary. I afterwards heard that a cowboy down on the Rio Grande had a little disagreement with him and killed him. I cannot vouch for the truth of it, but Bills always was argumentative; and arguments, especially political ones, raise rows and cause a dearth in families, not only in Texas, that State of the lone star, but quite frequently in old Kentucky, that glorious old State filled chuck full of fair women, politicians, fine horses, blue-grass, and sour-mash.

Mr. Aldridge's man took charge of the culinary department, and our increased family moved right along in the even tenor of its way just as if there had been no change.

All hands turned out for branding. The pen with its chute completed was located a couple of miles from our headquarters, over towards our east line, on a level plot of land, with water and timber near by. We drove a number of cows with their calves inside the corral, and then proceeded to rope the calves, throwing each one and hog-tying in such a manner that we had perfect control over them. The branding and marking were easily accomplished in spite of each mother, who seemed very much worried during the process, and delighted when her offspring was out of our hands and we could return it to the maternal bosom. And it did return right quick. It couldn't be suffering very much, for in a minute or less it was at its mother's side, taking nourishment just the same as if its ownership hadn't been inscribed on its hide. Our ordinary brand was six inches in diameter. We put a four-inch brand on the calves and it readily grew to the regulation size, many times exceeding it, in fact. In some cases I have seen my brand grow on an animal until it was as large as a peck measure—let scientists explain why, for I cannot.

In three days the branding was over, and besides the game we had, another luxury was added to our bill-of-fare in the shape of mountain oysters. Anything that gave us a rest from bacon was hailed with delight, for we had little to discuss besides our cattle and meals. We were so tired when night came that we never burned the midnight oil, or anywhere near it. We would "guy" a comrade who sat up after nine, either to read or write, and he usually quit.

CHAPTER XXII.

After three days of branding we were perfectly willing to settle down and enjoy the quiet of a beautiful Sabbath day. We were glad branding occurred so seldom, for the labor was very severe. Some of us roped the calves and I became quite proficient, often eliciting rounds of applause from the boys. Then again I bit off a little more than I could chew.

Roping and holding a four-months-old calf, if it happens to feel a trifle offish—and most of them did—is a task not to be desired. None of us were seriously injured, but our hands looked as if we had been down in a coal-mine and miners' lamps scarce. Some of the calves could not be driven into the corral, and had to be roped outside. I got hold of a vixen, and forgetting to wrap the rope around the pommel of my saddle, held him barehanded. My usefulness was ended. A rope-burn is fully up to the standard, if there is any such thing in burns. Fortunately if my labor counted for anything, and I flatter myself it did, the branding was nearly over, and I was placed on the retired list to a certain extent.

Mr. Aldridge's mule team having become a part of our establishment, I was not slow to impress them into service. I used them for a trip to Caldwell to carry up the balance of our late partner's effects, to bring back a load of corn for our horses, besides some canned corn and other things for ourselves. As usual my trip was a success and I was treated like an ambassador to a foreign land, or as I suppose they are treated, wined, dined, and musically entertained to my heart's content.

Once more I pulled westward and went over the ground that I was so many times to travel in future. I stopped for noon at the same creek I did coming up, gave the animals a similar bait of corn and the same length of time to graze. I drove extra fast past the place where Billy and I borrowed the melons—we must have borrowed, for the woman said we did not steal them. I stopped with the genial Cliffords, who, by the way, were Kentuckians. Was their open-handed hospitality any wonder? I was at the camp again, and with the usual cry, "U. S. Mail," all came running out to meet me. A stranger might suppose that a member of the camp had been absent for months, instead of two or three days, from the cordiality of his reception.

George C—— and Mr. A—— went up to the old ranch in Barber County, to be absent four days. They had now been away seven, and were not in sight. We were in a hurry for them to bring our plow, as we wanted to plow up some sod to use in building our chimney. No rock anywhere near us, so we were obliged to use sod. Our log cabin was nearly completed, and how inviting it did look! It really seemed to me a thing of beauty, and I felt sure it would be a joy as long as we should occupy it. We were very anxious to move in and get to living in our new home. The nights and mornings were very raw, and an open stable was not very comfortable at that season.

Game of all kinds was very plentiful, so we fairly reveled in it. John killed a deer, and he knocked over a couple more, but never got them. I killed a turkey within a hundred yards of the cabin, and two more up the creek, about a mile. Parallel to the stream for about three miles was a line of ponds which had some small native fish in them, and they were a great resort for ducks and geese. The flight from the North had begun some time ago, and I had already killed more than one hundred ducks. We were great meat eaters, and no game spoiled on our hands.

The first ducks to come were the blue and green-winged teal. They were the smallest duck we got, but what they lacked in size they made up in flavor. A dozen of them stewed in a pot with dumplings made our camp a good meal. Later we got other varieties, such as mallards, redheads, pintails, a sort of fantail, two or three kinds of gray ducks, and a few canvasbacks.

George and Mr. A—— returned the eighth day, bringing back the plow and some other articles left behind. They brought me a pointer dog, sent to me by my old friends, the Updegraffs. I renamed the animal, and called her Jane. Being fond of a gun, she shortly became very fond of me. She was a remarkable retriever, and was such a close observer that she seemed to know when birds were wounded full better than I did myself.

Opposite the cabin and across the creek, about one hundred and fifty yards away, were two quite fair-sized ponds, and they were my principal hunting resorts for ducks, geese, and even swans; for I killed some of each of those varieties. The actions of my dog were so much like those of a human being that they are surely worth recording. Her eyes were rarely away from me, and when I took my gun from its rack she was so happy she could hardly contain herself. We went across the creek, and I slipped up behind a brush-patch, glancing over the two ponds for ducks or other birds. There were bound to be some there during the season, for they were nearly always on hand nights and mornings. I laid out my programme, and of course it consisted in getting opposite the birds and approaching as near as I could in an erect position without being seen. Meantime I couldn't help looking around at that faithful animal. There she was, right at my heels, very quiet, very careful, and watching my every movement. And now comes the laughable pert. When I began to crawl on my hands and knees, Jane got right down on her belly and dragged herself along. If she had stood up straight she would not have been up in the air as high as I was, but she didn't know that, however. When I got close up to the game I at times had to lie perfectly flat myself; and then to see that dog hug the ground and flatten herself as much as possible, was to me one of the most laughable things I ever saw. Many is the time I have stopped before shooting and laughed until my sides ached. What must that dog have thought then? She seemed to consider it all in the play, and when I would look at her with my eyes fairly running with tears from so much laughing, I could detect just the least movement of the tail, and a dignified look on her face—a sort of pleading look, as much as to say, "Oh, do stop this nonsense, and shoot."

I took one shot sitting and another as they rose. On no occasion did I ever get less than two or three, oftentimes five or six, and I have bagged as high as nine large-sized ducks with the two barrels. That isn't nearly as large a story as many tell, but it is as large as my conscience will permit. On one occasion my herder John shot into a flock of thirty or forty teal, and gathered up twenty-four of them. He allowed some of them got away. Perhaps they did. I don't know. I heard his two shots, and shortly after met him with the number of ducks named. The balance of the tale I cannot vouch for.

Thinking and writing of old Jane reminds me that on one occasion I crept up on four swans sitting out on the water—the dog, as usual, behind me—and knocked over two of them. They were rather large-sized birds for her to manage, but she plunged boldly in and, swimming for the one making the most fuss, attempted to take hold of it. It was badly wounded, but how it did cuff and knock poor Jane around, causing her to scream with pain. But she never gave up until she brought that bird to shore; and then such frantic efforts to pull it up the bank to where I could get hold of it I never saw. There have been, and are now, fine retrievers, but, with all my experience with many varieties of bird-dogs, I have never seen but one fine-haired, thin-skinned pointer that would break ice in order to reach a duck and retrieve it. I had one other dog that would do the same thing, but he was an irrepressible, warm-coated, thick-haired, red Irish setter, and when they are retrievers nothing daunts them; the game they are going to have.

Our old black and white setter, Dan, followed Jane's example, and really became quite a dog. They got to be excellent coon dogs; and as there was not much timber near us the coons usually took to the water, and what fights we did have! As I look back upon it now, it seems cruel alike for dogs and coons; but we were younger then. We even killed a half-dozen otter with the aid of our dogs, but we had to render them plenty of assistance, as an otter in the water is more than a match for any two dogs. We managed to trap and kill quite a deal of game, so that when we came to sell our winter's collection of hides it brought us in a tidy sum.

Winter was fairly upon us. Our fall work was nearly finished, or as much of it as could be accomplished under the circumstances. We were not able to do much plowing of fire-guards or put up much hay, but we accomplished very many other things. We were fairly installed in our twelve-by-fourteen cabin. There were three bunks, some chairs, a kitchen-table, a cook-stove with its accompanying furniture, a cupboard, bedding, and some other necessaries. We had no room for a fireplace and we missed it; but our stove answered and kept us tolerably comfortable, besides doing nicely for the cooking. Our cabin was quickly put together, and was, of course, very plain; but it was comfortable, and made us a good home.

Our partner, George C——, concluded to go East on a visit, and I took Mr. A——'s mules and hauled him to Wichita to take the train, that being the terminus of a branch from the main line of the Santa Fé, and our nearest railroad point. We renewed acquaintanceships, met our old friend Matthewson, "Buffalo Bill," and spent a jolly evening with him at the theatre; and his merry laugh rang in our memories for many a year. "Rip Van Winkle," very old, yet ever new, was the play; and how we did enjoy it! Civilization still had charms; and bidding George adieu, with many good wishes to Eastern friends, I, as usual, consoled myself for a few days with a round of social pleasures among the hospitable people of Wichita.

With a lonely feeling I turned my mules southward on their hundred-mile drive for camp, with a good load of necessaries aboard. One of the mules was a balky beast and very set in his way, although he was a very thoughtful and sedate mule for one of his tender years, being only two years old. While driving I found myself wondering of what on earth, or in the skies above, that pensive brute could be thinking. After a little he came to a complete halt, refusing to proceed; and then it was very evident to me what his cogitations were about. Patience being one of my chief virtues, and not being pressed for time, like the Egyptian mummies, I quietly awaited signs of renewed activity on the part of his muleship. After a thirty-minute stop, patience being its own reward, and for no apparent reason, he went ahead to suit his own pleasure.

Mules, in many instances, come under the head of fixed and stubborn facts, and when I made camp with those two and my load, I was delighted to get there, as the journey was none of the pleasantest. On my return I told Mr. A—— that I was very glad to see my original partner starting back after nearly a year and a half spent on the frontier, sound in wind and limb, with a good report to give to Eastern friends and relatives. He allowed that he hoped, in a year or two, to visit his relatives in old England with a similar report, and I re-echoed the sentiment.

CHAPTER XXIII.

We arranged all of our trips from camp so that when one was absent the others divided his share of the duties. Having completed our arrangements for winter and hiring a rollicking, reckless cowboy by name of Jim Hudson to take George's place, we divided the labors and our camp progressed finely. I looked after the culinary department and took a share of the range-riding besides, but the kitchen duties seemed to fall more especially upon me.

Although cowboys are always hungry, they are not regular at meals. It is one line of business that when meal-time arrives and the bell rings, they don't throw down the shovel and the hoe, but keep right on attending to duties in sight. Meals on time cut no figure with them, but business, their employer's business while on the range, was with them paramount to everything else, and no matter where they were their employer's interests were always in mind. Next to railroad-men, cowboys were more interested in their calling than any other class of men I have ever seen.

This irregularity at meal-hours was rather severe on the cooks, but never a complaint did I hear because of it. I have heard them grumble a little when they were obliged to prepare half a dozen different meals for strangers in one day, and I could hardly blame them; under similar circumstances I complained some myself.

Mr. A's—— men took their departure and we settled down to routine business, a camp of four, things moving like clockwork. About this time I had an errand which called me over on Medicine River. Towards night I found myself in the neighborhood of a little town called Kiowa. I put up there until morning, fed the mules and got supper at the hotel, making a few acquaintances meanwhile. A little later I was invited to attend a debating society and accepted the invitation. The affair came off in a log schoolhouse, which was packed to its utmost capacity, and they all entered eagerly into the evening's proceedings.

The question as announced was: "Resolved, That the Indian has more cause for complaint at the hands of the American people than the negro." I was urged so hard to speak that I could not refuse. I wrote my lady friend in the East about it, and told her that she would possibly have been amused to see me holding forth, clad in blue flannel shirt, trousers tucked in tops of boots, and six-shooter slung to my side. Somehow it did not strike me as an odd rig, and the audience certainly never remarked upon it. The judges decided in our favor, and we settled the question for all time, viz.: the negroes are the most abused. It was the most appreciative audience I ever had the pleasure of addressing, except a body of cattlemen and cowboys; nothing very chilly about them. When a person really says something good and feels and knows it, he can get action in such an audience every crack—different from so many Eastern audiences, composed almost entirely of Solomons sitting in judgment, thinking to themselves, "How much better I could do it." They consist mainly of the class who live, move and have their being in one small locality, and who rarely ever see their country except in an atlas, and would not recognize or appreciate it if they saw it in any other manner.

Of course I left Kiowa with mutual expressions of esteem and good will, urgently requested to repeat my visit, but it was a town I never had the pleasure of stopping in again, although off the road and lost within a dozen miles of it two or three times afterwards. I could follow main traveled roads fairly well, but when off the trail I was usually in trouble.

Having finished our afternoon repast of bean soup, bread, cold venison and coffee, cleared away the dishes, cleaned up our all-around table, Mr. A—— seated himself with pipe and London *Times* for the balance of the afternoon; I jotted down a few notes and read home papers. After finishing my few literary labors, I saddled my horse to go out on the range, followed some hunters to their camping-ground, and requested them to be careful not to let their fire get away from them. We did our share of hunting, too, though our man John killed the most of the deer, as two handsome bucks of his shooting, hanging on the trees near by, went to prove.

As Mr. A—— sat there reading his English news he was a picture of perfect contentment. Nothing ever did, nothing ever can, disturb that calm serenity which seemed to rest upon his placid countenance; nothing worried or fretted him; nothing troubled or vexed him; heat and cold, hardship, hunger, thirst, danger, excitement and calm, were all the same. The more we saw of him, the more we saw to admire in him. A few days ago we broke a cow of his to milk, and she, becoming twisted up in her picket-rope, broke her neck. When the news was communicated to him at breakfast, he said, "Well now, that is too bad; I cannot have any milk in my coffee." That was all the allusion he ever made to it.

We had already begun to do some trapping, and our home, instead of looking like a cow-camp, looked more like a hunter's cabin. Hanging and nailed to the walls were the pelts and evidences of nearly all our different varieties of game, and the number was by no means small. We were all sportsmen in a modest way, and in the game season our bill for bacon was not large.

Three gentlemen from up in Kansas drove up and stopped overnight with us, and urged me so strongly to go on a hunt with them, and so assured me that they knew right where game was very plentiful, that I consented. In seven days we returned sadder and wiser men. I could have killed more game than we did, in the same length of time, and not have gone two miles from our cabin. The truth of the matter was, we were lost and had an Indian scare by nearly running into a lot of Cheyenne warriors out on the hunt, and pulled quickly for home. They would have done us no harm, but we were frightened just the same. I had to divide blankets, as usual, and suffered somewhat. We were caught in a severe storm, and all in all the hunt was not a success.

We had so much company and our cabin was so small, that much as we enjoyed it alone, when crowded it was quite a different place. All arrivals had to be housed and sheltered just as long as there was standing room. As an example, I remember we did have on one occasion three or four more than our cabin could seat or accommodate, except by standing; and two or three of us did stand until early bedtime, when our guests took blankets and rolled up out in the open-air stable.

Writing of that stable reminds me of three or four nights when we were all soaked there, and also reminds me of an experience Mr. A—— and I had there one moonlight night. We were just about to fall asleep, when we heard a slight noise on the hay and leaves. Rising up in our blankets, we saw two polecats in uncomfortable proximity to our vests; and not being anxious to make any shooter play, we simply said, "Shoo," and they went, but how very deliberately. We hung up a lighted lantern, but there was not much sleep for us the remainder of the night. We were quite certain they were a species of polecats called the "hydrophobia cat." Their bite is accounted the same as that of a mad dog, and is undoubtedly correct. They are smaller than the ordinary polecat, and climb trees on occasions. Mayne Reid speaks of them in one of his works, saying that their habitat was not quite up to Central Kansas, not farther west than the east line of New Mexico and Colorado, not east of the Missouri River, and well south into Texas. They were very rare, or they would have occasioned us some considerable fright. I never saw but two in the daytime; my dogs treed both of them, and I shot them.

About this time I wrote my mother a letter which has been saved, and with which I will end this chapter of a cowboy's memories (for that is all it is or claims to be).

"CIRCLE-BAR RANCH, December 15, 1889.

"MY DEAR MOTHER—I seize a moment of quiet, such moments being rare, to wish you and other dear ones, "a Merry Christmas," something your absent son will hardly have, and will not perhaps particularly deserve; and yet were I with you all, and could I participate in your quiet and most sensible festivities, it would please me above aught else. It all comes vividly to my memory, seated by my cabin fire, and yet it seems so long ago. I can see your cheerful faces seated at your own or one of your sisters' hospitable boards, can hear your ringing laughter, as brains neither deadened by too much luxurious food nor exhilarated by wine give forth burst after burst of wit, good sense and good humor. The spread will be most excellent, bountiful and appreciated, the variety great, and the main features the same as in years gone by. It could not be bettered, and if the Circle-Bar Ranch could just take one course from you, it would never be missed, and what a feast it would be for us. You will all feel well filled at the close of your repast, and while you won't stop hungry as a wise man once advised, you will none of you feel as uncomfortable as did your youngest and an Eastern relative, on one occasion, when trying the scales after dinner, they were sure of a gain of four pounds. It seems too much like a Greenlander's capacity, and I feel sure there was something wrong with the scales. I can see you all passing the remainder of the evening in genial conversation, interesting to all alike, with an occasional variation of music and instructive games. Perhaps the day may have been one of winter's loveliest, just enough sunshine to make the beautiful white snow glisten and sparkle, which together with the merry ringing sleigh-bells and smiling faces, go to make up a scene my eyes long to look upon; but they will gaze upon another and a far different one.

"Let me, my dear mother, transport you in fancy to the country of the Cheyennes, to a little retired spot just under the sand-hills, and near a clear running brook, lined by occasional cottonwoods, so few and so scattered that they seem lonely and spread out their gnarled, knotty arms as if in sympathy with the wee little log house we call our own. This, then, is the spot to which I would call your attention, this squatter's home, in short, the home of the cowboy. It is such a tiny cabin, so homely, so many rough logs incased in dark earth and roofed over with at least fourteen tons of the same material, the rough slab door, the mud and stick chimney, surmounted by buckhorns as its only ornaments. Although so homely it has a rustic air that would make it a prize in a public park. With all its rustic simplicity, we built it, we love it, and it is home to us. It is twelve by fourteen on the inside, and yet nine of us slept in it quite comfortably a few nights since. The ocupants of the cabin on Christmas Day will represent West Virginia, Indiana, Illinois, New York and England. What they will do and what they will eat, will take but a brief description. What they will think would fill a volume. Just before the gray of the morning, the stentorian tones of John may be heard, "Rouse up, boys; time to get breakfast." And John never makes a mistake; without a timepiece he will call us at almost the precise time each morning, and we obey the call. For our breakfast we don't have cakes or rolls with Chenango County butter, a bit of steak, as our Englishman would say, homemade coffee, some fried potatoes and toast. We have nothing of that kind. We shall simply have some rather heavy biscuit, fat side-meat, some straight coffee and sorghum. For dinner and supper we will vary the diet with some kind of game and some canned goods. The day will be devoted to our labor, the same as other days; and we shall not give any Christmas presents, because we shall have nothing to give. Later. I postponed my letter for awhile to get supper and clear away the things. Mr. A—— has been telling me a few things about Australia; the boys are trying to sing, and I am trying to write. It is safe to say that none of our efforts are very much of a success, and I am liable to bring this to a close almost any time.

"During the nights on our hunting trip, I rested poorly; and now the weather remains cold, and we have so much company, that I am usually compelled to sleep on the floor near the door, which is not a very good fit, and lets in quite a large amount of air. The cabin, under all the circumstances, is not quite so much of a comfort to me as it might be. I don't write such things for sympathy, but I want to show you it is not all child's play, neither is it one continual round of pleasure. Please tell our absent partner that the cattle are wintering finely, and have not shrunk any as yet. Hoping this straggling missive will find you all in good health, and with a "Merry Christmas" and "Happy New Year," I am your affectionate son,

"BENJAMIN."

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was the new year of eighteen hundred and eighty, and we ranchers were trying to pull ourselves together after some of the severest labor of our lives. Our entire camp, assisted by two neighbors, had just devoted three days and two nights to fighting fire. With hardly any rest, insufficient food, none of it warm, part of the meat raw, and no sleep, we were trying to brace up and were glad that enough range was left to do our cattle until grass should come, if we could escape an inside fire. The ground was so thoroughly burned over all around us, that we were perfectly guarded for the rest of the season from our neighbors, who set us all afire and themselves too, in endeavoring to burn a guard around their range. The whole thing was due to their carelessness, and they owned it up afterwards, but that did not help the matter any at the time, or save us from exertions that were simply tremendous.

About eight o'clock in the evening a motion for bed was carried by a rising vote. John took a look out and said: "Boys, our range is all on fire; we must up and away." There was a rush for corn sacks, gunny sacks and old clothes, everything of that character that could be put to use in pounding out the flames, for the fire has to be literally pounded out. Horses saddled, bridled, mounted, and we were away in the gloom, only lighted by the beautiful yellow sky in the north and east. The four or five miles of distance was quickly covered in a helter-skelter race, not to beat one another, but to beat out fire, and that too right soon. Presently we were all at work, so that our anxiety and enthusiasm caused us to work harder than we could stand and to become exhausted very soon. Discovering this after a little, we worked in pairs, and while two fought, two took a good rest. We kept up the rather unequal struggle until the gray of the morning, when the two neighbors put in appearance, cheering us with their assistance. By their advice two of us went after our mule team, plow and a barrel of water. When we returned and settled to work with more method, something seemed to be accomplished. Where the fire was running over the short buffalo grass, we could plow an occasional furrow and do what is called "back fire," thus saving range in that way. When the tall grass in the hollows and other places blazed up to a height of from six to ten feet, we could do almost nothing. While the apparently unequal fight went on, something was all the time accomplished so that our hopes and enthusiasm were not dampened.

Fortunately for us the breeze was only moderate and part of that was caused by the flames. It was work, tug, and strain, very little talking and no joking. We couldn't spare breath except for consultation and directions. John was in command, and all quietly obeyed. Very frequently two were ordered away to fill the water-barrel; then one was ordered to camp for a cold lunch and to feed the saddle-horses, milk the cow, and attend to any imperative duties, with the injunction to "hurry back." And so it went, hour in, hour out, and we were surely saving range. Our interruptions were many. Every few moments some one had to run to put out a newly started fire behind us, caused by the wind carrying some little brand or spark, which was just like tinder, or it might be a weed behind us unnoticed and still holding enough fire to communicate with something near it. So it went with us all, but without a murmur the fight went on until the battle was fought and won, or until John said: "Well, boys, we've saved enough range to do us. Let's quit."

A sorry lot we were. Our faces like coal miners', our clothing torn, scorched, bedraggled and completely worn out. But in camp once more, with a free use of water, a change of garments, a goodly quantity of coffee for the inner man, we indulged in congratulations all around and were thankful it was no worse. We yet had range and to spare, so at once took in a few hundred head of stock belonging to one of our neighbors who was completely burned out.

On a beautiful New Year's, a day or two after the fire, we thought it best for all to go out after some venison, and with considerable encouragement for getting some too, for John said he knew where some deer "used"—he meant the locality where they roamed and fed. So we armed, saddled, and were off. A ride of a couple of miles brought us into the locality, or within half a mile of where John thought we would find the pretty animals. The wind was in our favor, so we rode on a few yards over a little sand-knoll down into a shallow draw with bush and weeds in it. Looking off in every direction, somewhat spread out, we rode into the brush-patch. In an instant all was confusion; deer sprang up around us, between us and among us. Our horses whirled, pranced, jumped, and one began a systematic case of pitching, or bucking, as it is sometimes called. Mr. A——'s favorite mare stood on her hind legs, refusing to do anything but whirl on them; and as the deer rose up around him, jumping past him, I heard a remark in his quiet tones that sounded like this, "The prairie is growing deer." We were all trying to shoot, but no one could for fear of hitting man or horse. But finally, after we were straightened, the deer having an excellent start, with our horses at full speed, we wasted some lead in their direction. It only caused them to run the faster. Then we all turned sadly towards camp.

no one blaming any one in particular, only thinking how careless we all had been. On that occasion eight deer jumped up, and to a sportsman, or to almost anyone else, it was a very pretty sight. John sort of gritted his teeth and said, "Before this winter is over, I'll get some of those animals," and he did get three of them. Mr. A—— and I did not seem to have much luck killing deer, but we easily managed to keep the camp, at least part of the time, supplied with game of the feathered variety, including many sorts of water-fowl, as well as quail, chicken and an occasional turkey.

That winter of 1880 was a great winter for game for us, and our camp had the reputation of eating more game in proportion to its size than any in our neighborhood, and the word "neighborhood" comprised a section of country as large as three or four counties in an Eastern State.

At this time I received word from my former partner, Billy W——, in Caldwell, that he was considerably under the weather; thought an Eastern trip among relatives, friends and old acquaintances would benefit him, but he would like to see me before he started. I saddled my horse, set out on my forty-five-mile jaunt with as little thought of the distance as if it were a half-dozen miles away, and with no preparation except to see that my cartridge-belt was not empty. We carried pistols because everyone else did, not because we needed them particularly, but because of the sense of security and almost companionship.

A Texas once, while perhaps a trifle unintentionally profane, answered the six-shooter question, giving his reason for carrying it continually on the frontier. He said: "One might carry a gun for ten years and never need it at all; then, again, he might need it like h—l."

The Colt's "45," with its scabbard and belt of cartridges, was a cumbersome affair, but so used did we become to it that we did not mind the extra weight and felt lost without it. Weapons of light caliber were an unknown quantity in cow-land.

I made my ride in about eight hours, and had a happy meeting with my old friend, besides many new ones. A day was spent profitably and pleasantly together. Good-byes were spoken after I had loaded my saddle to the full extent of its strings; and then, over the same old ground for camp, which took me rather longer on account of my extra load. I found mail for us all at the line, exchanged the same old courtesies, which were ever new, and in a couple of hours was at camp, distributing packages, mail and considerable sunshine on account of the contents.

CHAPTER XXV.

A band of eleven wild horses had been making headquarters in the upper part of our range, and was seen by members of our camp very frequently. In talking about them with our two nearest neighbors, it was decided to join forces in order to give them a chase. The plan to be pursued was an old one, viz., to keep them moving day and night, with no opportunity to graze or drink, finally tiring them to such an extent that they could be driven into a corral like domestic animals. This was done by relays, as the wild horses nearly always circle in the course of ten or twenty miles, returning somewhere in the neighborhood of their own stamping-ground. Of course this required moonlight nights, as they must never be out of sight.

The men selected a regular camping-ground, not far from where the horses ranged, that being their base of operations. The animals were not hurried or frightened unnecessarily, for if they were, they might run clear away a great many miles and not return. The arrangements being all completed, John and Mr. A—— went from our camp, two from our neighbor's camp, and one man was hired for the occasion. Everything went well for the first three or four days, but the night of the fifth our men returned worn and disgusted. They reported having lost the trail in the evening just before the moon arose, so were obliged to give up the chase. Two days after we learned that another party took up the trail where our boys lost it, followed the animals on perfectly fresh horses, and succeeded in capturing five of them. We felt sore over the matter for a long time afterwards. As a rule such chases never pay. The wear of one's own stock, loss of time, neglect of camp duties, and all together, does not pay even if a capture is effected. If one catches a few of them, the trouble and danger in breaking and taming is hardly equaled by their value. A part of them are really and truly wild, because they were born on the prairies, have never been roped or branded—indeed, have no marks upon them of any kind, showing conclusively never having been handled by man. The other part of them may have been used some, but straying off and falling in with the unbroken ones, their naturally wild nature comes at once to the surface, and the desire to roam free, like their brothers, takes complete control of them. Were it not for the curiosity of the wild horses and a natural desire to remain in nearly the same locality for long periods, they would be much more difficult to capture; yet in any event, human ingenuity would finally outwit them, the same as it does all others of the brute creation. During the wild-horse chase one of our men and myself were obliged to do double duty; and at the end of the five days of extra exertion, ours was a much used-up camp. Right then and there we vowed that our ranch would devote itself strictly to its legitimate occupation, leaving the chasing of wild horses alone.

It was a most glorious winter, especially for our business. The cattle looked sleek, fine, and had not shrunk a particle. Our horses were in excellent condition, barring those engaged in the five days' chase. The days were sunny, the nights were quite frosty, often freezing a half inch of ice where the water was still. I was suffering more or less discomforts, mostly from the large number of visitors with whom we were blessed, but I never grumbled out loud, though it did bother me somewhat. This was a most excellent lesson, and it hardly seemed as if I could ever in future complain of the quality of the food set before me, of the beds furnished, or the hundred and one things with which the race is so prone to find fault.

After a deal of effort, considering the room there was, we succeeded in building a fireplace right beside our stove. We made up our minds that a log cabin without a fireplace, where the logs and knots, odds and ends could be burned, was not to be thought of. What a comfort it was to us, besides a great source of enjoyment! Many were the evenings, when the supper was over, the dishes attended to and put away, no one seemed to care to read or play cards, the lamp or candle was put out, and we all gathered around the sparkling, crackling fire, part green wood, part dry, just enough of a combination to give us a good blaze. There we put in a couple of pleasant hours, every one smoking and some one always talking. The matters of greatest interest and moment to us all were the details of the day, nothing of even the minor ones being left out.

Sometimes one of us would go into reminiscences, and though all were not particularly interested, they paid attention. Like an Indian audience, the relater was listened to with rapt attention and rarely interrupted. It was not like a tea-party, where one has difficulty in hearing the nearest neighbor; it was a phase of social life hitherto unknown to me, and by no means uninteresting.

I received a box from friends in the East that was five weeks on the way. Heard it had reached Wellington, county seat of Sumner County, Kansas; started to Anthony for it, having it forwarded there by a freighter, and waited three days on that account. Time was no object, however, when a large consignment of comforts, necessaries and some luxuries were to be had. Such a time as I had unpacking, and how our boyish eagerness did amuse some strangers, our guests for the night, as we opened package after package. No one in camp was neglected, but I think the articles most acceptable to some of the boys was the smoking and chewing tobacco, of which there was a goodly variety. If the donors could have heard our expressions of delight they would have felt amply repaid for their outlay of time, trouble and money. It had been my fortune in years gone by to be the recipient of many more or less valuable gifts and favors, and while they were always appreciated and enjoyed, there was never a comparison to the box in the lone cabin on the range. As one gets older, in most instances it is more pleasant to give than to receive, but we evidently were not past the receiving age.

At this time I had word that a couple of young greyhounds were old enough to be taken away from the homefold, and a party of four of us struck out after them, about seventy-five miles southwest. I was to buy them of Frank W——, an old friend with whom I hunted in the winter of '78, and who gave me such a fine antelope and rabbit chase with his hounds. These dogs were from the same stock, so could hardly help being good. On the trip the same old programme was gone through with. We experienced some extra cold weather. I slept on the outside, or tried to, and blankets were scarce. We lost our way and found it again after a day and a half of wandering to no advantage, but we made the camp all right, procured the dogs, had a little shooting and were back home at the end of five days, a rather played-out lot of individuals.

The hounds were beauties, being even better than they looked, and were for a long time a source of a great deal of comfort to us, although the chases we had with them were far from beneficial to our horses. The dogs were no doubt a detriment to our business, but we did not give that matter a thought. If we could get any sport in the field that apparently did not directly interfere with the cattle business, we were not on the lookout for anything remote.

We had some spare time on our hands as the winter was so fine on stock, those on the open range actually looking like the corn-fed animals up in the State. We didn't seem to dread March, no matter what kind of weather it might bring; as our cattle were in such fine fix, we felt as if they could pull through the severest storms which might come before new grass. Under such circumstances, it was no wonder that our camp presented a smiling appearance, and we indulged in field sports to quite a degree. Mr. A—— and I succeeded in keeping the table supplied with small game, while John killed an occasional deer. It was thus the days moved swiftly by and another spring approached.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A LETTER to a friend in the East, saved until now, gives a tolerable description of quite an important occurrence, and I copy it verbatim:

"CIRCLE-BAR RANCH, Feb'y, '80.

"MY DEAR J——: I have written you one letter since receiving any, but '*es machts nicht aus,*' as a German would say. I am going to write another, although it will not be mailed for four or five days. You see on this lovely morning, the boys are out on the range, everything is quiet, with the exception of the birds, and they are just overflowing with melody. I have finished all my morning labors and have nothing to do until noon; hence in this glorious calm my thoughts take shape and flit away to a few at least of my friends in the East. I read the *Leader* account of your party and for a moment almost envied those to whom the gods are good, longing for the pleasures of civilization myself. But why should it affect me? I have forgotten what little I ever knew about it, and am such a lazy sort of a person, my presence in a ballroom would create smiles for others and sympathy among my friends. While such pleasures seem to be denied me, I am truly glad my friends can enjoy them.

"The month of March, that '*bête noire*' of the cattlemen, is fast approaching, but we don't fear it this year, for our cattle are in too good fix to die, no matter how severe the weather may be; besides, the weather holds so lovely, we don't seem to anticipate anything very serious during our worst month. We have received numerous compliments upon the fine appearance our cattle present, and we know it is partly to be attributed to their good handling.

"I am feeling quite proud just now over a little thing lately performed. Two evenings since, about the witching hour of sundown, or perhaps I should say swandown, I killed a swan. It was not altogether the killing of the swan, and that too with very fine shot, but the manner in which I prepared it for the table. Of course, in killing the huge bird, I did the usual amount of creeping, crawling, and getting clear down flat, dragging myself along over the prickly stubble, both dogs ditto; then had to shoot for the neck, the only vulnerable part for quail shot. But it was accomplished, and as the swan threshed around in the water, the dogs received many a blow from its wings before taking it to shore. As I intimated before, it was not the killing, but the cooking, that struck me as worthy of relating.

"The bird must have weighed thirty pounds or more, and being *chef de cuisine,* a great task devolved upon me and the capacity of the stove was stretched somewhat. The beautiful skin was removed, the bird cleaned, and then came the stuffing. It seemed as if it took a dozen pounds of dry bread, a pound of sage, with salt and pepper to correspond;

then I chucked the whole thing in the oven and was going to await results, but suddenly it occurred to me how my mother used to baste the turkeys, geese and ducks, so I basted and very faithfully too. Fortunately the important part of the baking was not forgotten, and the meat, while rather dry at best, was still quite palatable. That day we were a trifle lavish with canned goods, and we really enjoyed almost a Thanksgiving dinner, but there was a large amount left over, so the boys said not to kill another swan for at least a week, which behest was obeyed. While such a dinner would be made light of in civilization, it was a feast in a cow-camp. With the usual number of good wishes,

"I am as ever, yours,

"B. S. M."

I was practically alone and had been for a week, excepting for my dogs, milch cow and a few horses that I was feeding. Hadn't seen a human being, and felt that I would really like to gaze on some sort of an individual. The opportunity came soon after the wish was uttered out loud. I was reading quietly, and heard a loud "Hello!" Going to the door I saw one of our German friends who lived up in Kansas a short distance, and came down our way after wood, occasionally deigning to pick up a load of bones to haul to the railroad. Also on occasions he hauled us some corn for our horses, so we were on good terms. He inquired if he could stay all night, and my "Yes" was so enthusiastic it almost took his breath away. I urged him to stay, and was so pleased to see him that it seemed like a clever piece of acting. But when my loneliness was mentioned, and that companionship was wanted, he saw the point and fell readily into line. Being asked if he would like duck for dinner an assent was given with a questioning glance. Beckoning him to follow, and whistling for old Jane, we betook our way across the creek to the favorite ponds a couple of hundred yards away, going through the same old plan of creeping and crawling towards the pond until within fair shot, and then banged away. The German had followed the whole programme, even to the good work of my pointer Jane, and when the old girl laid down the birds one by one at our feet he said "Das ist gut, sehr gut." Then he mixed up his praises in English and his own language until he and I laughed out long and loud. I told him what that pond furnished us to eat in the way of birds, fish and turtle, and he asked me how I thought some of my Eastern friends would like to be located in such a game country. I could not tell, but said, "They wouldn't mind having such shooting near them if it could be coupled with good beds, good food, steam heat, oysters, theaters and churches, especially the latter." Civilization and palace cars are not conductive to good shooting, yet I have been informed by some Eastern sportsmen that they prefer to go five, ten or twenty miles from their homes, killing a few partridges, returning home with their game at night to a fine bed, fine supper, proud, happy and very tired, to a jaunt in the Western country, or some other game country, a long distance from home. I have always been glad so many felt that way. It has saved a heap of shooting for some of us who like to hear the gun crack oftener, and who seem to need a larger supply of game. Our Teutonic neighbor asked after the other members of our camp, and I informed him that our two men had taken the tent, starting a temporary camp about eight miles south east, in order to better hold the cattle which were hunting grass in that neighborhood, and Mr. A—— had gone to the railroad. My visitor wished some ducks to take home with him, so in the morning just at daylight I was at the pond, and succeeded in killing five, which he accepted with pleasure, and after breakfast went on his way rejoicing.

The next morning I was notified of a shortage of provisions at the other camp, and Mr. A—— not having returned, I hooked up a modest sort of rig, a couple of cow-ponies to a light lumber-wagon which would haul perhaps fifteen hundred pounds, starting for Caldwell by way of the lower road. It was a drive of more than fifty miles, but I easily made it in a couple of hours before sunset and was once more in a town, which had begun to boom since I was there some weeks before. They were all agog because they were going to have a railroad. The Wichita branch was to be continued down to Caldwell and over across Bluff Creek, one mile farther, to the line of the Indian Territory, where they were to build stock-yards to be ready to receive through Texas cattle and carry them to Eastern points. The same cattle could not be driven into the State of Kansas or any of the adjacent States for fear they might give other stock a disease known as Texas fever. A singular anomaly is, that while the cattle which come up from Texas appear perfectly healthy themselves, they are able in some unexplainable manner to communicate a complaint which is difficult to cure, and which is often fatal. We learned more of this dread complaint later, but scientists differed widely regarding it. I found Caldwell in the throes of a boom, with some real estate changing hands, not as much, however, as the last buyers could wish.

In a real-estate boom there are always some who bought last. Not having any money to spare out of my business, I easily refrained from buying any realty, not having yet learned how to buy lots on margins, neither was I aware how little money really changed hands, or how rich in prospects one could be with a number of margins put up on lots that in a short time would sell for cash or greater margins, thereby swelling the dealer's exchequer. I had all that to learn, but I didn't begin that kind of schooling just then. I was far more interested in being a raiser and producer. The cattle business was to me the sum and substance of square dealing and straight money-making, and is so yet for that matter. Speculation either in land, lots or anything else, hadn't put any wheels in my head, and there was no hurry for it to do so, such ideas coming all too soon, Americans seeming to be particularly susceptible to speculative tendencies. Perhaps it is all right and will always continue, but where one succeeds so many fail. But that is an old, old story, and with the cattle business has nothing to do.

At that time I did not buy any town-lots in Caldwell, but I did purchase lots of provisions, or at least as many as my small wagon would carry; and with a good-bye greeting to all, I was off for camp with my load, happy as a person could possibly be with satisfactory purchases. Camp was made as usual in a day and everything found to be all right, my English partner only a short time back from the railroad, and while wondering what had become of the camp occupants, taking matters very philosophically, getting himself a bite to eat, smoking his pipe in patience, simply waiting for something or some one to turn up. While he was calmly and quietly glad to see me, not one bit of enthusiasm or eagerness did he manifest, not then or at any other time.

* * *

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE beautiful weather changed, and all owing to a breeze from the Atlantic States. It was very cold, and our men, who were facing the storm and turning the cattle so they should not get too far away, were suffering severely, but they did it in silence, and not the least part of it was with their feet. They would insist upon wearing fine boots a size or two too small, and the consequence in cold weather was chilblains. Advice was wasted on a cowboy in a small matter of that kind, so we made a little fun at their expense, but they grinned and bore their pain, and that was all there was of it.

A couple of wood-haulers blew in with the gale, and offered to enlarge our wood-pile if we would only take them in until the storm was over. We told them to make themselves perfectly at home, and while they might help us with some more wood for our fireplace, they were perfectly welcome, and need not lift a finger. But that wasn't their style. They were poor homesteaders from up in Kansas and accustomed to struggle; indeed it was a continual struggle with them to get any sort of a livelihood. Under their vigorous handling of the axes our wood-pile grew very rapidly, and after two or three hours we called a halt.

I was cooking another swan which Mr. A—— killed the day before, and how those men did enjoy it! After a brief talk I learned that one of the strangers was originally from Hornellsville, N. Y., and we were very congenial talking over a section of country with which we both were so familiar. I had put the man down as a New Yorker before he had made a dozen remarks. Something about his tones and actions made me think so. Anyhow they were a rarity in that locality, as most of the men we met were from Indiana, Missouri, Tennessee and Arkansas. Of course, many were from Iowa and Illinois, and scattering from every State in the Union, while not a few were from the Old World. One rarely ever saw a jolly, open-faced Hibernian around those parts. Perhaps it was owing to the plentifulness of six-shooters and scarcity of churches; the former they abhor and the latter they adore. Whatever may be the reason, they were not near us and we missed them.

Our farmer guests remained two days with us, ate their fill of game and other good things with which we happened to have been lately supplied, and left us with pleasant words, also a promise to call again.

February was over, March fast passing, and while one or two storms had scattered and mixed the cattle badly, they had done no other harm. We had two neighbors on our east, right close to us, who had been holding or pretending to hold something over two hundred head of half-breed shorthorn cattle, since the previous fall. They made an effort to keep them away from our cattle, and did succeed until winter fairly set in; after that they became mixed with ours, and it was just as well for the owners, for our men held them better than they could themselves. They were used to stock in Missouri, but when it came to an open range it did not suit them at all. Those two Missourians became very much dissatisfied, perhaps a trifle homesick with it all, and began to talk of selling their fine stock. Having been with the cattle so much, we liked their appearance, and commenced quietly to talk about buying them. Our man John urged me, in case they could be bought right, to try and raise the money back East among relatives and add them to my herd. He talked the matter over fully with our neighbors, and finally got their lowest figure, which he assured me was dirt-cheap. I wrote East to borrow the money, making some plain statements of the benefits that would accrue, and was assured that I could have it. I paid some money down and bound the bargain. Owing to some delay of mail, the money did not appear, and finally my neighbors gave me three days in which to get the money for them, or the sale was void. Some one else had offered them a dollar more on a head, but they refused for a time. Not knowing upon what I could rely, it occurred to me to go to Wichita and borrow if possible for ten days. Wichita was seventy-five miles away. One day to ride there, another to transact business and rest the horse, and a third to return. Our neighbors loaned me their favorite saddle-horse, an animal with all the gaits and just suited for the long journey. By sunup I was off, and as the shades of night were falling I rode into Wichita a weary individual with a weary horse.

The next morning found me refreshed and at the bank in consultation with its president, who with very little demur let me have drafts for about six thousand dollars for ten days. It was different somewhat from Eastern banking, and it came high, but it came just the same. Fifty dollars for the money for ten days was quite a heavy rate of interest, but that was nothing in comparison with losing the bargain entirely. A day of visiting in Wichita, and with my drafts in my pocket, I was off for camp by daylight the morning of the third day. Just as the sun was falling behind the western horizon old Larry and I loped into camp. I threw my pocketbook to my neighbors in waiting, and with a shout, "Take your money," dismounted, took off the saddle, turned the horse loose, and away he went with a bound and a snort, as much as to say, "What is seventy-five miles to me?" I didn't bound or snort either, but just dragged myself into the cabin, threw myself on a bunk and began calling for something to eat. It was a great strain on me, unaccustomed as I was to long-distance riding. The effort and the worry together were quite a drain on my system, but the recuperative powers of the human frame, especially of a youthful one, are wonderful, and the next day I was around attending to my regular duties as if nothing had happened. In two days more I received my drafts from the East, and immediately sent them to Wichita, so that the bank was not out of its money anywhere near the ten days mentioned. At that time and for a few years afterwards, the credit of stockmen was most excellent, and they were considered good for the money they borrowed, but the interest rate was very high.

This purchase of two hundred and fifty head of half-breed shorthorns put my bunch of cattle in most excellent shape, and was the nucleus of what was afterwards a very fine herd. By this time our ranch and range were becoming quite well known. The terms of the deal were not kept secret, and I was congratulated on all sides for having consummated a most excellent bargain. Having passed a part of a summer, fall and winter there, the cattle were thoroughly acclimated, and the country and climate were bound to agree with them. Either one of us three partners could buy any number of cattle we pleased, within reason of course, and we all had our individual brands and paid expenses *pro rata* according to the number of cattle we owned. After trying it a while we found such a partnership as that to be altogether the most agreeable and satisfactory.

March was ended and so were its terrors so far as range-work was concerned. It came in like a lamb, went out the same way, and furnished no killing storms. It was early April, the trees were budded, the grass was showing up green, and the timber was everywhere filled with warblers. All nature seemed to rejoice with us, and our camp was a very contented one. Eastern letters told us of mud, mud everywhere. We saw none anywhere, and only three times since the last September had we seen any, which then lasted only for a couple of days at the most.

I was looking forward to a summer in the East with considerable pleasure. It might seem singular once more to be under leaden skies, to be in an old-fashioned rain-storm, and to be in a number of them. Probably it would be enjoyable. I knew it would be pleasant to get away for a summer from flies, noxious insects, any amount of hot weather and the innumerable discomforts of an outdoor camp in the Southwest. I was used to it and could have remained, but a rest for me had surely been earned, and a longing to see relatives and particular friends should surely be gratified, which was done later when all my preparations for a summer sojourn away from camp were completed.

Two men arrived at camp who had written me about the cattle business. They were anxious to learn it, and found plenty to do as we were hurried and short of help. These men represented a large amount of capital and wanted to begin at the foundation, which suited us down to the ground. We hired a cook as John went over on the west, into Barber County, to attend the first round-up. I was delegated to ride the range, and put in from twenty to thirty miles each day. It was an agreeable change from cooking, especially as the weather was pleasant. The round-ups had fairly begun. Our camps were left with one man each, who looked after home matters and what few cattle were on the range. The balance of us were on the round-ups east.

I remember our first day and night. We had made a late start in the forenoon, and with quite an outfit, including a number of neighbors, pulled in at the Salt Fork of the Cimarron just at night. Through carelessness of not supplying ourselves with water-kegs, we were absolutely dependent on the country in a dry time. The water of the river was salt, as its name implied, but it was our only show. The animals seemed to enjoy it, but we couldn't drink it at all, and the coffee we made out of it was vile. Before sunup we were moving down the river to a spring that never went dry. Reaching it about nine, we camped close by until late in the afternoon; then drove on until dark. The next forenoon we reached the round-up party, and before night had a large number of cattle gathered in, and began to separate or cut out our different brands.

My partner, George C——, returned from the East, glad to get back among the cattle once more. He reported having had a most enjoyable winter in New York State, but said his heart was on the range all the time he was away. The fascination of a life on the range can better be felt than described. If one has an occupation that keeps him side by side with nature, it seems as if more happiness can be gotten from it than from a sedentary calling, and it certainly is more healthful.

We remained with the round-up party until our cattle were nearly all gathered, and while it was a most laborious task, it was both exciting and enjoyable. How could it be otherwise, with more than one hundred and fifty men in the saddle, many of them the finest riders on this continent, and almost no poor ones. Cutting out cattle requires riding that would put hurdle-racing to blush so far as keeping one's seat is concerned. There were some bones broken, but no one was killed, and everything passed off satisfactorily, the different ranges getting a large per cent. of their cattle.

Returning to camp once more, and helping to drive home a goodly number of cattle, I felt at liberty to make my preparations for going East. They were soon concluded, and after a two years' absence in a frontier country, leading a peculiar life, I found myself on the cars being whirled along towards the old home. I reached it in due season, and received such greetings as seemed to make me the lion of the hour. I tried to be modest, but the effort almost choked me. I spent a delightful summer; and how I returned to the ranch in the fall will be told in another chapter.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In New York State, among relatives, friends and acquaintances, the summer passed away all too quickly. Not an hour hung heavy, and such good treatment had a depressing effect on preparations for a start to the Southwest. I had talked ranch, range and cattle until my tongue had absolutely refused to do farther duty in those directions. The outcome of it all was, that a number from Tompkins County set out for the West, and some from Chenango County, besides two brothers from Philadelphia who made ready to go directly to our camp in the Indian Territory, to look the ground over, and perhaps embark regularly in the business. Two of my cousins went out to pay us a visit and see things we had mentioned, with their own eyes; perhaps for purposes of practical investigation and to indulge in a little hunting in case any could be found.

Having some business to transact in Chicago and Iowa, I set out in advance. Once more the hour of departure and uncertainty arrived, and I apparently kept up good heart, while I bade father, mother, brothers and friends good-bye, but it was harder than at first. I had grown older, very much older in two-and-a-half years. Life had taken on a different phase; some of the boy's play was absent. The uncertainties were quite well appreciated, the knowledge of what was ahead of me was more fully appreciated, and the Indian Territory seemed a long distance away. I had already taken final leave of my best lady friend in B——, where my affections were firmly riveted, and that pulled hard, even if we were hopeful. But taken together with the parting from my parents who had never fully consented to the wild life and business I had undertaken, it was a severe tug at my heartstrings. The invariably kind treatment of the summer just passed, didn't make it any easier to depart; and when good-byes were spoken and the train pulled out of my native town, as I stood on the platform of the car and waved adieu to my parents, brothers and friends, I came within an ace of bursting into a loud cry. Something seemed crowding up in my throat that would not down, and I actually had to turn away and go inside the car in haste to control my feelings. Such partings are among the hardest on earth.

As the train bore me farther away, I tried to think of our glorious range, our handsome cattle, the bracing rides over the magnificent prairies, the great amount and variety of game, the free outdoor life, and the jolly open-hearted people, but my thoughts would not leave the old home and friends just yet. Usually on a long journey one forms pleasant acquaintances who help to shorten time, but I spoke to no one and went into Chicago as glum and silent as a deaf and dumb man. Once there, however, I rallied; and bearing in mind some purchases, which if not particularly necessary were to add to my pleasure, I became interested, shut out the sad thoughts and became more like my old self again. I bought quite a stock of clothing, guns and ammunition, and so added considerable to my luggage. I made a short stop in Iowa among old friends, and then pulled southwest.

Kansas City, that ever-bustling place, was reached in due season. Once more I took the reliable Santa Fé, and sped away over the beautiful prairies of Kansas. And what a delightful ride that was, through Lawrence, Emporia, and a host of thriving towns, outlined on every side by beautiful farms, whose grain productions have hardly been equaled. Then when we reached Newton, there to leave the main line, going down on the Wichita branch, through that great corn county of Sedgwick, and on through Sumner County, whose beauties are hard to describe, until Caldwell was reached, the terminus of the branch, and where the last mile of rail went over to the Territory line to tap the great cattle-trail, which, with its quarantine grounds right adjacent, loaded many hundred cars with the Texas longhorns for Eastern markets.

I met the old faces in Caldwell and many new ones, its population having increased. Western towns are occasionally stricken that way. A rapid growth comes on them like a plague, its coming unheralded, its cause only guessed at. In a few months, or at most in a few years, tents are folded and a large portion of the inhabitants quietly steal away. Places in southwestern Kansas and the Indian Territory are surely fair examples.

The southernmost city of Sumner County, Kansas, was already beginning to take on Dodge City airs, and the day after my arrival I welcomed my two cousins and the two brothers from Philadelphia to its hospitable gates. Never having been in what was known as a cattle town, things seemed strange and crude to them. The apparent unrest, the life and activity where there seemed to be no particular call for it, the continuous cattle talk and whittling accompaniments, seemed to them strange, uncalled for, and entirely out of place. The characteristics and customs of such a town seem never to change until the cattle business in it is a thing of the past. My friends could not complain of lack of cordiality in their reception. They were paid as much attention as if they were members of the English nobility. Invitations of different kinds were fairly showered on them.

In order to more fully initiate them, a party of us took them to a dance-hall, somewhat noted for frontier high life, but more truthfully for that of rather a low order. "The Redlight" was its name, and when we reached there it was not late in the evening and the revelry had not reached its height, but the dancing was quite lively. We took our seats on benches ranged against the wall, and looked on without attracting any attention whatever. It was a small hall, and the floor was full. The price of each dance seemed to be drinks all around, each man marching his partner to the bar and calling for something in vociferous tones. Such a method of settling dancing bills was something unique to my friends, and they watched the proceedings with considerable interest. There seemed to be something attractive about it, and we lingered even after we knew that we ought to be somewhere else.

Towards the last of our stay the beverage began to work and matters became quite lively. We were beginning to talk of taking our departure, when two men became involved in a quarrel. Whether it was over a girl or an old grudge, I never knew, but when they clinched I motioned to the boys, and we hurried out of the back door. The step was higher than we knew for and we all fell in a confused mass, rolling over and over each other, but fortunately no one was hurt. We tried to reason out our haste and really all looked a little sheepish, but we had no need to, for five minutes after we left we heard the report of a heavy pistol, and one of the men we had seen dancing was writhing in the agonies of death. After the evening's experience our friends were glad to load up and pull out for camp.

The start was made in fair season, which was necessary as we had two big loads. Four went in a spring-wagon, and the other members of the party went with the luggage in the lumber-wagon. It turned out to be a long, hard pull, and night overtook us before camp was reached, so we went supperless to bed on the prairie, with insufficient covering, and a dreary night was passed. Early in the morning we hooked up our teams, and in half an hour were at our upper camp, such as it was.

We had two camps, and the boys down at the lower end of the range had a log house, while at our upper camp they had nothing but a tent. The accommodations looked very slim to our visitors, as indeed they were. For a day or two smothered complaints could be heard. There was really no place to stay but out of doors; the ground was a hard bed; the provisions were rather poor; the flies, bugs and insects of various kinds hadn't been frozen out or in yet; and take it all together, our Eastern friends were very homesick, and I didn't blame them. I was so sorry on their account, I was almost homesick myself. But we cheered them by saying that right soon we would move over in the old log cabin toward the west side of the range, and they would be more comfortable. Besides we assured them that the game season was near at hand, and soon they would have shooting to their hearts' content. With our tent we had a car which went on wheels, and it was used as a sort of corn-bin, storage house, and place for provisions and harness. I picked out a narrow corner of it, as the tent was crowded, and used it as my sleeping apartment.

The Philadelphia boys became infatuated with the business and determined to go in with us, having a brand of their own and sharing in the general expenses according to the number of their cattle—all of which was satisfactory; and the oldest brother, Charles R—— and I went up to Caldwell for provisions, and at the same time he was looking for a chance to buy some horses and cattle. We had the usual good luck on the trip, and returned to camp in good time. My friend finding some cattle he thought would suit, went back to camp for help in buying and branding. Of course our man John accompanied him and acted as general adviser and assistant. Five or six hundred head were purchased and branded, as well as the requisite number of horses, and they were immediately driven down on our range, and the new city boys became cattlemen almost before they were aware of it. Everything moved like clockwork and the business went merrily on.

CHAPTER XXIX.

We all moved over to the log cabin and had a great house-cleaning time. We found any amount of bugs and insects native to the land, and three snakes, one a rattler. One day of hard labor with plenty of hot water, and our house was habitable once more, adding much to our comfort. We now had two regular camps, located about eight miles apart. We called ours Circle-Bar Ranch Number One. Of course the other, at the southeast corner of the range, with our foreman John C—— in charge, was Number Two. They had a new cook down there, a well-digger by occupation, whom George C—— found in Caldwell, and employed. I took the culinary department at Number One, and became chief cook. The R—— brothers joined Mr. A—— in riding the range, and so the business settled into its old rut and everything went along swimmingly.

The ducks had begun to arrive, the quail were ripe, and our Eastern friends were having very good sport. But one was still homesick, his teeth were troubling him considerably, dentists were scarce, so he decided to go East, where new teeth could be procured. He was not much taken with the cattle business, and concluded that the East was good enough for him. We bade him good-by and good luck, and turned to our duties, not having been interrupted or discommoded.

Our relatives and friends were always welcome, as indeed were very many strangers. We were glad to meet them, and sorry to part with them. Before he started East we were determined to give my cousin from the rugged hills of Delaware County, N. Y., a good hunt. We were aware that a man who had tramped through some of the counties of that State after foxes, rabbits, squirrels and other game, could stand any sort of a jaunt that we could, and was bound to enjoy it.

Leaving both camps under the general supervision of our partners, new and old, Mr. A——, our foreman John C——, my cousin R. C——, and myself hooked up our team to the lumber-wagon, loaded in supplies, blankets, guns, ammunition, a dog, and set out. We drove through the muddy water and shifting sands of Salt Fork about noon of the ninth of November, 1880. The sun was shining brightly and the weather was like early October, a regular Indian Summer in fact. We only made a few miles the first day, and camped by a famous spring in a shallow draw with not a stick or bush in sight. But we had brought some firewood along with us in anticipation of a scarcity of fuel, so we were prepared to cook our frugal meal and have a camp-fire besides. All rested well the first night, and in the morning, bright and early, we were eating our breakfast and not caring at all for a forty-mile drive ahead of us.

The drive was made without incident or sight of game, except a few prairie chickens and occasional glimpses of coyotes in the distance, nearly always just out of range. At night we pulled in on quite a celebrated creek, called Eagle Chief, where there was a cattle-range noted far and wide. The sky had clouded somewhat, the wind was veering toward the east, and we gathered together a goodly supply of firewood, thinking it might come in good play before morning, and it did. We had no tent, and rather an insufficient supply of blankets, but our heavy duck wagon-sheet, which was spread over all, seemed to supply deficiencies.

We went to bed early, noticing a chill in the air, but not giving it much thought. About two in the morning some one awoke and said: "Boys, wake up and see what is over us." We were covered with a mantle of snow. About four inches of the white, fleecy article had fallen, and was still at it. We built a huge fire, or rather my cousin, R. C——, did, for he was a great fireman and very active; and the fire was a beautiful sight—so beautiful and at the same time so weird and lonesome that without breathing it aloud we all of us wished ourselves back at the old ranch. Not much more sleep for any of us, so at daylight we prepared breakfast, fed and watered our team, hooked up and struck out in a blinding snow-storm.

We traveled by the wind and struck directly for a large forest of jack-oaks, or black-jacks, which we knew was east of us. Reaching the timber all right, we pulled a few miles into it, searching for water, where we might camp. None was found, but we reached a sort of depression in the jacks, where there was a row of about two dozen cottonwood trees. There we were almost certain of water, but still found none. It had been a dry fall, and the sink-hole was dried up. However, we had discovered signs of turkeys, deer and plenty of quail, so we went into camp, and melted snow into water for our horses and selves, going straightway about it. Having a scarcity of pots and kettles, it was a tedious task to supply ourselves with enough water. But we cheerfully took turns at it, and two kept camp while two were hunting. We had no hay or grass for our horses, but we brought along enough corn for a few days, and we helped it out by cutting down a cottonwood tree and letting them browse on the branches. They are very fond of the bark also, and, while it evidently has medicinal qualities, it is no bad substitute for hay during a few days. With a little grain, it will help to sustain animals for a long time.

Our worries and troubles were aggravated by the serious times we were having with our boots. I concluded to let mine stay on, because if I pulled them off once, I knew that in their damp condition I could never get them on again. They pinched a little at night, and sleeping in them was not one continual round of pleasure, but I survived it. R. C—— and John C—— had any amount of trouble with theirs, and the labor Mr. A—— underwent in getting his boots off and on, was enough to make a man of fair reputation in a civilized land swear like a pirate. Not a minute less than an hour did it take that imperturbable Englishman to get his boots on in the morning. Straining, tugging, working, kicking against a cottonwood log, and puffing away at his everlasting briarwood, his calm equanimity seemed never to be disturbed. The balance of us, between our labors, would stop and watch those persevering efforts, and laugh until the tears ran down our cheeks; but not a smile, not a frown, changed the calm serenity of that man's countenance, he only seemed to puff his pipe a trifle harder. Finally, when the act was accomplished, and both boots were on, Mr. A—— moved off about his duties as if nothing had happened. I was informed that he was a fair sample of an English gentleman. If such is the case, and we Americans think we can whip England easily, there is a bare possibility that we might get fooled and wish ourselves out of a job.

But hunting was our principal occupation at that time, and we had heard and read of people long before us, spending many a day and night in the snow without shelter, so we believed we could do it, and we did.

Right in the heart of the "jacks," and away from a watercourse was evidently the place to find game, for there we found it. Time and patience were required to attend satisfactorily to camp details, and hunt successfully, but we certainly accomplished both. One day I mounted old Whitey and rode off by myself to try the turkeys. Getting about a mile away from the cottonwoods, I saw a bunch of them some distance ahead, scratching in the snow and leaves for acorns. Dismounting, taking off my coat and tying it to the saddle, I fastened the white horse to an oak-tree in a small opening, so that I could be sure to find him—there being only a few hundred just such openings on all sides. Then I took a roundabout out through the timber, among the little hills and knolls, doing it so quietly that I succeeded in getting in good range of the birds. In a very few moments I had three of them fluttering in the snow. I hung them up in a tree, so I should know exactly where they were, and then followed the rest along. I shortly came onto one, killed it, laid it beside an oak that looked rather larger than those near by, and was certain that I would know it later. I followed on farther, caught up with the flock, or ran across another one, and killed two more. Laying the last two birds across an old log, I said to myself: "They are easy found; now I'll go and get my horse, and then gather up the turkeys." I took the direction where I knew the horse to be, and kept on walking half an hour more, until it occurred to me that the horse must be lost. I persevered, however, and kept on for a while longer, until I said to myself: "What a dunce I am! I'll take my track back." The snow bothered my eyesight, and I had been looking up instead of down, always looking for a familiar tree to which the horse was tied. I did not expect to see the horse, for he was just as white as the snow, and very quiet; he enjoyed rest and the flies were not troubling him, so I was looking for the tree instead of the horse.

Beginning to look for my own tracks, I was dumbfounded. There were tracks everywhere, and they led in every direction. Could it be possible the other boys were near by? I hallooed loudly, but no answer. It occurred to me that my own feet had made all the tracks, and upon closer examination I was convinced of it. I was lost. It was nearing dusk; my matches were in my coat-pocket; the coat was on the saddle. What was to be done? Thought became impossible, namely, connected thought. My fright made a fool of me, and I raced and chased in any and every direction. The sweat dripped from my face as if it were midsummer. I was out of hearing in the black-jacks, in the snow, without any matches. I was almost worn out and ready to sink. I was fast reaching the crazy point, and it seemed as if an hour or two must have brought it.

With eyes to the ground, keeping a fast gait, seeing the imprint of boots in the snow everywhere, I ran right up against that old white horse standing there as grim and silent as the snow by which he was surrounded. What a reaction! How I did hug and pet that old fellow. I hung around his neck, kissed him on the cheek, and fussed with him until he stared at me in surprise. Then bethinking myself of a lunch in my coat-pocket, I gave him the two biscuits, eating the bacon myself. Many a time happiness has been right at my door, but it never had entered the threshold in such a volume as when my horse was found and I was saved. Never mind the turkeys; I didn't know where they were and didn't care.

Mounting the horse, I rode for a large knoll in an opening to look for the cottonwoods where the camp was. After riding a short distance I came right up to the tree where the three turkeys were hung, and they were quickly strapped to the saddle. The knoll was soon reached, and there were the cottonwoods not more than a mile away. Just at dark I rode into camp with as many turkeys as any one had killed during the day, and not a word did I say of my being lost or my consequent fright, at least not then. We stayed in the snow six days, killed about thirty turkeys, three deer and a large number of quail.

We drove home in a day and a half, crossing the Salt Fork with our load, on the ice—quite a change from a few days before, of summer to ice-locked winter. We were greeted with the most cordial expressions, it being possible that magnificent lot of game had a deal to do with it. We never inquired, and did not care, so great was our pleasure at being back. My cousin, R. C——, said that if he never had another hunt in his life he would be contented, or try to be, and he was ready to start East. Thus ended my hardest and pleasantest hunt.

CHAPTER XXX.

The cold weather was the general topic of conversation and the cause of much anxiety to stockmen on all sides. The cattle hadn't shrunk perceptibly as yet, but there was a long winter ahead, or time for one, before new grass should put in an appearance. Bearing that fact in mind, we were all more or less worried.

My cousin, R. C——, was all ready to take his departure for the East. That hunt was the crowning glory of this section of country, and will be a green spot in his memory for years to come. The freedom and unconventionality of the cattle business made a strong impression on him; and the pleasure the new partners were taking in it convinced him that there certainly was a line of business outside the teeming cities and thickly settled districts worthy of considerable note. He said it was the trip and visit of his life, and business called or he would gladly spend the entire winter with us.

Our partner, George C——, was going East for the winter; so the two packed up their traps, I hauled them to the railroad, bade them good-by, returned to camp with my usual load of provisions, and things moved on once more in much the usual way.

The weather was so cold, and the streams being generally frozen, the riding was extra severe. Each range-rider carried a small axe for the purpose of cutting holes in the ice, and the same places were reopened each morning; so the cattle were able to get water. It was something remarkable to see how soon those wild cattle learned what was being done for them, and how regularly they visited the holes in the ice. The instinct attributed to most varieties of the animal creation so nearly approaches reasoning powers that those most conversant with it are hardly able to draw the line. The almost human actions of our animals nearly convinced us that they have reasoning faculties of no mean order.

The water-fowls had all gone south, or, more properly speaking, farther south, for we were located quite a distance below the Mason and Dixon line; and we had, for a change from the everlasting bacon, only quail and venison. The turkeys from the hunt were nearly used up, as we shared with our neighbors, which was quite customary.

In my absence from Camp Number One, our English partner assumed the duties of cook, rather to his disgust, although he never complained. Devoting so much time to the culinary department seemed to have made me rather thin; so, needing a change anyhow, and holiday time approaching, I determined to go up to my favorite town of Wichita, for what I claimed was a much-needed rest. To be perfectly truthful about it, the real reason was to get away from the pots, pans and kettles for a time, and enjoy myself.

I went to Wichita for a jolly time and I found it. What the city is now I do not know, but in the late '70's and early '80's, it was the most hospitable town it was ever my good fortune to be in. I had no way of returning the many complimentary entertainments enjoyed, and it didn't seem to be expected. Such a whole-hearted, generous lot of people are seldom collected together in one locality, but they were there sure.

But this book isn't written for complimenting any particular number except myself, so Wichita will be dropped for the present, and pleasantly so. I had met soon after my arrival there, a young stockman of my acquaintance from Barber County, Kansas, and we had a jolly visit together. His father was superintendent of a railroad in the Northwest, and this young man had a number of annual passes. In a joking way he handed me one, a Santa Fé pass, saying: "That will run out in a few days; take it, and go while it lasts." He hadn't the remotest idea I would use it, neither had I at that time, but a little later the idea occurred to me, why not? A railroad pass seemed far beyond me, but although it was not transferable, the conductors did not know young R—— or me either, so it was almost certain I could ride on it. So proud of it was I, that on a number of occasions, no one being near, I quietly took it out of my pocketbook and looked it over, perhaps to satisfy myself that my possession of it was not a dream, perhaps to almost gloat over it and think what a fortunate being I was.

No matter what one's station in life, or of how much property one may be possessed, man or woman is very fond of traveling on a pass. It may be one's importance is increased. Possibly it seems no robbery to take from a corporation, and, shall I write it, more times than any other, is the expression heard: "Anything to beat a railroad company; they'll never miss it." Sometimes it actually seems as if railroad conductors would get to be inimical to the entire human race, that they would get sour, looking upon every individual as a probable enemy. Yet it is not so, for, as a rule, conductors are better natured and more obliging than any other class of business men. That having been my experience, I give it for what it is worth.

That pass almost burned in my pocket; something kept urging me to use it, and being rather easily tempted, I decided to try it. But which way should the trip be made, east or west? The west had the preference, and like the soldiers in a hurry, light marching order was determined upon, and the train was taken from Wichita to Newton, my fare paid for that first twenty-five miles. As the west-bound train pulled out I felt guilty, and my heart got right close to my throat. The conductor came along, examined the pass quite closely, looked at me, and inquired about my father's health; hardly waiting for an answer, he said: "I hope your father enjoyed his trip when he was over our road and improved in health." I allowed that he certainly did enjoy it, and was much pleased at courtesies shown him. I put it on rather thick, but the occasion seemed to require it. I drew a sigh of relief when the conductor moved away without referring to family resemblances, or going very deeply into detail. The Rubicon was passed, the first conductor was satisfied, and I braced up to a degree which surprised myself, concluding that a white lie well stuck to, with unblushing cheek, was quite in my line. No more fear from railroad men on the trip. The lights in Dodge City looked familiar, and it would have been pleasant to stop off, but I was pressed for time. Just as far west as it was possible to go and return before the pass should run out, was for me the thing to do.

Up to the time of leaving our ranch no dead cattle were reported on the range anywhere in our neighborhood, but west of Dodge I saw them by the hundreds, the fence on the north side of the railroad being lined with the hides for long distances. How I did thank my stars that our cattle were not on an unprotected buffalo-grass range, pure and simple. Such a range is, no doubt, the best in an open winter, but in a stormy one it takes a hardy steer to live through it.

I was having a most delightful ride until Las Vegas was reached, and then my pleasure was sadly interfered with. While the train was making a stop at the station, I heard the clanking of chains coming into the smoking-car. Three miners and myself were having a quiet game of cards, and we all looked around to discover the cause of the noise. A posse of six men, armed with Winchesters and six-shooters, seemed to have three men in charge, who were chained together. They made quite a racket, but it was nothing in comparison to the howling mob outside. What it all meant we couldn't understand, but it was all shortly explained to us. Seating his prisoners, Pat Garrett, the marshal in charge, spoke in a loud voice, and said: "Any of you people who don't want to be in it, had better get out before I lock the car, as we are liable to have a h—l of a fight in a very few minutes."

Two traveling men went out of that car flying, never stopping for grips or anything else. I was too dazed to move. The three miners commenced to get ready for action, displaying a number of weapons and ammunition I hadn't noticed before. They offered me a big six-shooter, but I declined. One of the deputies came over and explained that they had for prisoners the then celebrated "Billy the Kid," and two of his men. The mob outside of the car were holding up the engineer and fireman, and would not let the train proceed until they had secured one of the Kid's men. It seemed that he had killed a Mexican a year before, and now that he was captured and apparently in their power they wanted to lynch him. Garrett and his men had brought the prisoners up from White Oaks the night before, had put them in the jail at Las Vegas until train-time, and were starting to take them to Santa Fé for imprisonment and trial. The Mexicans in Las Vegas had come out in large numbers, well armed and prepared to take this prisoner from the marshals.

It seemed as if the fight would begin any minute, and I expected to see the Mexicans fire into the car right away. I seemed to myself to be a non-combatant, and somehow I did not feel it to be my fight; so I quietly withdrew to the other end of the car, behind the stove, ruminating, and, of course, expecting the shooting to begin at any moment. How long the moments seemed, and how weak I felt! If I had only had sense enough to go into the next car when the traveling men went, it would have been such a wise thing to do, and I had gotten through laughing at them now.

But why don't they shoot, and how soon will the ball open? Great noise outside, but very quiet in the car. Nine men with cocked rifles sturdily standing off a mob of hundreds. Those men never flinched an iota. Such bravery, even to recklessness, was new to me. A delegation from the outside came up to the car, telling Mr. Pat Garrett they wanted one of his prisoners. He laconically replied, "Come and take him." In my admiration for such apparent unconcern at such a time I forgot my fright, drawing away from the stove and watching the proceedings with great interest. The clamoring, shouting and excitement still kept up, but it was all outside of the car. Right in the midst of it all, the train moved off, and not a shot was fired. It seemed another engineer slipped up on the engine, opened the throttle, and away we went. The crowd seemed to be so surprised they offered not the slightest resistance. They had captured a fireman and engineer, and they were all they had to show for their wild and exciting time. They, of course, did not want the trainmen, and immediately let them go. Why they did not shoot will always remain a mystery to me, unless it was that the mob was poorly organized and had no leader. It may be that those grim engines of death in the hands of Garrett and his posse had a quieting effect.

From Las Vegas on to Santa Fé was a noisy ride. There was plenty of whisky in the car, and a deal of it was drank. The fame of Billy the Kid had already gone from one end of the land to the other, and I watched him with a great deal of interest. His costume was quite on the Mexican order, his language much the same. His curly brown locks and handsome face would have attracted attention anywhere, and, while looking at him and listening to his conversation, it was difficult to believe that I was in the presence of such a red-handed murderer; but such he was, and such he remained until he himself was murdered.

I passed two days in that quaint old town of Santa Fé, tried to see all the sights, called on the prisoners, and took my departure east with regret. Reached Wichita on regulation time, and remained a few days before returning to camp, having had a most delightful vacation.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The weather was still severe and the old log cabin looked so good and so cheerful to me on my return, that I felt after all that there was no place like home.

About that time a rather laughable thing occurred, which seems worthy of being chronicled. The R—— brothers, at our camp, were undoubtedly the only range-riders in the Indian Territory who slept in regulation nightshirts. That they accepted gracefully the badinage consequent upon the wearing of such garments, goes without saying. Of course, our regular camp members were used to the sight of the boys climbing into the upper loft clad in voluminous white, but when we had company, which was at least five nights in every week and sometimes oftener, the comical appearance which they presented never failed to call forth a hearty laugh, often rounds of applause and encores even. Now the brothers were remarkably cleanly, namely, at their home in the great city. No doubt they were the same so far as the range with its poor accommodations would permit. We never accused them of anything else, but certain it is that in the course of a few weeks they complained bitterly of violent itchings. Mr. A——, our quiet English partner, occupied the bunk or berth directly under them, and I was on the first floor under. Neither he nor I itched any, and were enjoying perfect comfort, except feeling chilly occasionally.

Their troubles did not improve as the days went by, and they thought of sending to town for some medicine. Finally Mr. A—— and I advised them to examine their clothing to see what they could find. We had laughed over the matter so much to ourselves, that we were able to keep straight faces in their presence. It was undoubtedly wrong on our part to keep silent as long as we did, and it would have served us right if we had been caught too; but when we told them and they examined, they readily discovered the cause of their suffering. For a few days they made some headway in lessening the number of their tormentors, but they did not get entirely rid of them. We told them a general boiling of all clothing and blankets was necessary, but they didn't believe us and continued to suffer.

Two or three miles above the line we had a neighbor, a pleasant gentleman, but a trifle strait-laced, somewhat cranky, inclined to be rather on the goody-goody order; a man who assumed to be on the range, but not one of the range kind; a man who had beds, mattresses, sheets, pillow-cases, et cetera, and whose men were not allowed farther than the threshold of his house, so we were informed; and such things were so peculiar on the range, that he was commonly known as "the dude cattleman, the immaculate." Of course we met him occasionally, but had never accepted of his hospitality.

We were surprised to receive a visit from him one afternoon, but were glad to see him just the same. I did my best at supper-time, and really opened up some of our canned luxuries, all of which he no doubt appreciated. After supper it was quite dark, and we all urged him to spend the night. He seemed loth to remain, but we urged so hard, mentioned a rubber of whist, and finally prevailed.

After he consented to stay, we happened to think of our mysterious visitors in some of the bedding, for they were still with us, and were really sorry we had urged him so strongly; but there was no help for it now, and we all thought if he bunked in with Mr. A., whose clothing and bedding were all in good order so far as we knew, that everything would come out all right. The R—— brothers were careful not to make any fuss or unusual display, and everything passed off nicely. The next morning we bade him good-bye, urged him to come again soon, and he promised that he would, but that promise was never kept, for he caught *them;* so that was the reason why.

A few days after, one of the brothers rode by his camp, and such boiling of clothing was hardly ever seen. He rode up and bade Mr. B—— good-day, observing that midwinter struck him as being rather early in the season for house-cleaning. In a very gruff manner Mr. B—— allowed that it was. Each said good-day, and a few hours later our partner came home shrieking with laughter. "Misery loves company," and while it was rich and we couldn't blame John R——, still Mr. A. and I always felt somewhat mortified, not to say a trifle guilty. We had then a great time at our camp, boiling blankets and bedding; so we also rushed the season for house-cleaning, not waiting for April to come.

A right tidy cleanly cow-camp was almost an unknown quantity. No doubt there could be and doubtless were such, but they must have been rare. Ours was about like the rest of them, no better and no worse. We may have missed many of the luxuries and privileges of civilization; we seemed to have plenty of other things of which to think and talk. We never had time to keep up with the doings of the world, and our comments of what was going on, generally were few and far between. We were thoroughly taken up with our business, the news of the day not having the slightest charm for us. We differed in politics and religion, but no one cared, and the subjects were rarely ever mentioned. So far as our English friend was concerned, we never knew whether he was a radical or a tory, but from the way he once-in-a-while aroused from his impassibility and sang "God Save the Queen," and "Britannia Rules the Wave," we were positive that he was English to the core.

We were feeding many guests of all classes and descriptions. It came a little hard on the cook, but was all in the regular line of business. Our callers would start to sympathize with us on account of losses in cattle during the storms and hard winter, but we relieved their anxiety at once by informing them that thus far we had had no losses. They eyed us rather suspiciously until we told them to go down below where the cattle were the most plentiful, and see if they could find any dead ones.

The last days of January, brought the first break in the winter since November 10th, when the first snow came. No wonder that some of our neighbors lost some young stock that went into the winter in poor fix. Among our visitors came one from Philadelphia, the father of our partners. His plan of finding our camp was quite amusing. He knew that his boys received their mail at Anthony, Kansas, and that a prominent personage connected with them bore a peculiar nickname, which he had evidently forgotten, for he inquired at Anthony if anybody knew of a cow-camp where they had a man called "Circular-Saw Bill." No one knew of any such man, but did know a ranch down below where there was a man who went by the name of "Circle-Bar John." Mr. R—— said that was undoubtedly the place where he wanted to go, so hiring a team with driver, was brought to our camp. The surprise of the boys on meeting their father was very great, and they hardly knew what to make of it. But he was a plain practical business man who very soon made known his wants. His mills near Philadelphia needed the ever-watchful eye of his eldest son, and he straightway offered him six thousand dollars a year to go back, resuming charge of them once more. But Charles R—— thought of the many dyspeptic days in store for him at the desk, and decided to remain with us on the range, much to our delight, for we thought a great deal of him as he had made himself very necessary to us.

Mr. R—— was loud in his praises of everything he saw, and while he wanted his son very much, did not blame him for making the choice he did, or seem at all put out about it. Far from it, for before leaving he made each of the brothers a present of three hundred dollars, was kind, pleasant, agreeable, and as jolly as a young man ought to be. From what he had heard of the poor fare at cow-camps, he was inclined to think there must be some mistake, judging from our table. A box of good things had just arrived from the East, a new load of provisions from Caldwell, we had half of a deer, besides a quarter of a two-year-old steer. We were not really suffering for provisions, and as I had just gotten the hang of making buckwheat cakes, so that they really came off from the griddle quite homelike, it is not surprising that our bill of fare consisted of something more than regulation hot biscuits, bacon, coffee, and sorghum.

I never saw a man take a livelier interest in anything than Mr. R—— did in our ranch, and his visit did us all a world of good. Even our phlegmatic Englishman was stirred up and very much admired our guest. But he remained only two days, which slipped by in a trice, and the stirred-up camp once more settled itself to its normal condition.

CHAPTER XXXII.

People often change their minds in business as well as other matters. Charles R—— and I did. I had seen thousands of New Mexico sheep at Dodge City, and plenty of people buying them at from seventy-five cents to a dollar and a quarter per head; and reports in regard to fortunes to be made from handling them were rife. Indeed, some went so far as to say that on a small investment they would do better than cattle.

We planned to take adjoining quarter-sections a short distance from the Territory line, in Kansas. That would give us a head center, a place for a house, sheds and corrals, one of us remaining there and the other at the cattle-ranch. We knew by hearsay that men did well with sheep in Colorado, New Mexico, Montana and other sections; so why not in Southern Kansas? One thing we had learned, and that was that cattle and sheep did not do well together, the latter eating the grass so close to the roots that cattle coming after cannot get any at all. Besides, sheep must leave a peculiar scent, for range cattle won't try to graze where sheep have been. It was evident that they could not be handled in the Indian Territory, which was devoted almost entirely to cattle and horses. But there was an abundance of open country left north of us in Southern Kansas, and apparently it would remain in the same condition for years to come. Hence, everything seemed favorable to our project. I say seemed, advisedly, for that was all there was of it. Fortunately for us, our plans never materialized, cattle occupying our attention to the exclusion of everything else. Those who did invest in sheep lost in nearly every instance.

But while we were thinking of it, having another project in view, I concluded to occupy the house up near the sheep, not far from neighbors, going so far as to write a very particular lady friend in the East for a plan of a house, just as small a one as she could put up with—a sort of love-in-a-cottage affair. I received a very favorable report, only it seemed as if what the house called for would pull rather hard on the exchequer. The closet room would just about take up the entire building, of the size I was counting on. I had not been accustomed to closet room of late, and forgot all about one of the most important parts of a house. Thinking the matter over, it occurred to me that quite a number of homes in Southwestern Kansas, that sheltered many good people, did not have much storage room; but, anyway, the sheep project fell through, and so did the idea of the little house proposed to be constructed near the line.

The weather was mild, roads good, and provisions running low, so I set out for Caldwell, reaching there in the usual time of a little over eight hours. That night there came a great change in the weather, it setting in to snow as if it meant that winter had taken a fresh start. Eight or ten inches fell, and then it began to blow, which it continued to do for an entire day. That seemed to be the last straw that broke the camel's back. If that was the balmy South, we were wondering what the North might be. It had been a regular old-fashioned New England winter, and the cattle might about as well have ranged the New Hampshire hills, living on browse and scenery—for that is what they were obliged to do in the beautiful Indian Territory. I tried to talk some cattlemen, neighbors, into being cheerful and looking on the bright side, but it was up-hill work. I told them it was just what the long-horns needed to brace them up and give them rugged constitutions. Somehow my jokes seemed to fall rather flat.

The real truth of the matter was, that I felt quite sick myself for two or three days, until a neighbor came in on horseback, reporting very few dead cattle. Then my spirits rose, and, inquiring if it were possible to get through the drifts with a light load, he thought it could be done with plenty of time and a shovel. I took the hint, and pulled for camp. Providing myself with a goodly amount of cold provisions and blankets, I took the old-line road for the West. The trip to camp could ordinarily be made in ten or twelve hours with a light load. It took me three whole days. A description of the journey is unnecessary to those who have struggled with drifts; it seemed best to forget that trip, so it is very indistinct in my memory, but camp was reached, and the moderate load of provisions arrived just in the nick of time.

It came off warm and sunny the next day, so the snow melted very rapidly. By night there was plenty of grass, and no dead cattle to speak of were to be seen on our range. We took a little satisfaction out of the last snow-fall, for, we said, it will moisten the ground thoroughly, so that we may look for early grass. During that winter each time I left camp to go to any place it stormed, and furiously, too. The boys said I was not to leave camp again unless there came a regular drought, so that rain was badly needed.

My mother, being aware that I was in charge of the culinary department, wrote me that she feared constant use of baking-powder would prove very injurious to us all. I wrote her not to worry, as very little was used at our camp, for we made nearly all of our bread out of sour dough. That was a puzzler and must be explained: Sour dough is a sort of paste made with flour and water which is allowed to sour, and sometimes helped along with a little vinegar. We kept it in a jar by the fire, replenishing each day as it was used, always leaving just a little, which very soon soured the entire jar. A sufficient amount of the dough was added to flour, then some saleratus mixed in, and enough water for the proper consistency, worked into loaves or biscuits, and baked the same as any bread.

Our bread was often praised by strangers; also our buckwheat cakes, with the delicious Chenango County maple syrup. It wasn't made in Chicago, neither was the buckwheat raised in Kansas. It seems strange, even amusing, to an Eastern person, to talk of adulterating buckwheat, as cheap as it is. Yet I say boldly that not a pound of straight buckwheat could be bought west of the Missouri River, and I doubt if it can be yet. People in the East manage to box that and maple sugar so tight that occasionally some of their friends and relatives in the West get the old familiar taste once more of the Simon pure.

If I were inclined to moralize, which, of course, people never are, I would say: Oh, if Congress would only let politics alone for a part of a session and give us some laws with penalties attached, similar to those in China, in regard to adulteration and bank-wrecking, and a few such things, and then enforce the laws. If commonwealths objected to these changes, which would be so obviously beneficial, then do away with States' rights, at least in this regard.

A cow camp furnishes men with stomachs capable of standing anything and everything, although very few cowboys were fat. But good things were appreciated when they could be procured. As the business grew older, the fare became better, and the majority of the camps actually got to using milk. The idea was ridiculed at first, but became prevalent later.

Roping and tying a wild cow—for range cattle were always wild enough—was no easy task, but persisted in, the animal eventually became quite tame. Many breeders of fine stock in different States boast of the superior quality and richness of their milk, saying none equals it. Such people never tried the milk from a straight Texas long-horn, whose only feed was buffalo-grass. Some day, should there be a contest and premiums awarded, let them watch out for the Texan; she will take the ribbons, but they want to be sure to have a cowboy with his ever-handy rope, to do the milking.

It was getting toward tax-collecting time, and the methods of the Cherokee Indians to obtain a grazing tax did not please a majority of them or the cattlemen either. In my absence, the summer previous, a delegation of the Indian Nation waited on the different men at their camps and tried to collect a tax per capita on all cattle grazing on their domains, or the Cherokee Strip, so called. The tax, as understood, was by the year, forty cents a head on grown stock, twenty on yearlings. The Cherokees claimed this strip, which was supposed to contain something over five millions of acres, by direct treaty with this Government, the Indians yielding some rights and the Government setting aside a sum of money for them as well as their parcel of land in the Indian Territory. The Cherokees went so far as to almost claim a title in fee simple. To be sure, according to treaties, the only right ever ceded to them was an easement—a right to go over the land west to hunt. But they claimed it just the same, proposing to make cattlemen pay for grass and water, in which they succeeded. Rather than raise a row, calling forth too much attention to our matters in Washington, we thought best to pay the tax, of course provided we could do our own counting of cattle. It would have been almost an utter impossibility for the members of the range to round up their entire herds to count them, and the Indians knew it, so they were willing to take our count. It is safe to say that we never exceeded the number of our cattle; indeed, in some instances, I feel satisfied we fell short a few head, may be more. Then, too, we estimated the general losses by storms, and so forth, fully up to their real number.

When I was in Caldwell during the severe storm, we discussed the tax question somewhat, agreeing that while it was tolerably easy, their methods of collecting were far from satisfactory. We also talked over the idea of calling a cattle meeting, or convention, to be held early in the spring, to take measures to get acquainted, put ourselves on a firmer basis for pursuing our calling, to look up the round-up question, make arrangements, and to look out for our interests as a body. In pursuance of this, I drew up a call for a convention, stating its object and naming the time. I placed three or four of the prominent men's names on as making the call, modestly inserting my own name well toward the last of the list.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE warm sun, with plenty of water in the ponds, had brought the ducks, and soon there would be more geese and an occasional swan. One day Mr. A—— and I killed eighteen ducks, not small ones either. I sent some to the other camp, some to the neighbors, and prepared a few for our table; a most agreeable change from our bacon.

Such a balmy air made it difficult for one to realize that only a few days ago the country was torn up by the worst storm of the entire season. But so it was, being only a sample of the suddenness of our changes and severity of our winds. It was the middle of March, and the air was like that of May. The green grass was beginning to show in the hollows and light patches of timber, and the cattle were restless and searching for it.

Our large three- and four-year-old steers didn't look as if they had been through a winter at all. Charles R—— and I had a few of that kind which we bought in the fall to hold for a year and then turn off at a nice profit. They came through in such good shape we were sorry we did not borrow money, even at the Western rate of interest, and buy a great many more. But we were learning all the while. It was now time for the cattle meeting for which I drafted the call. Mr. A—— and I determined to attend, have our range represented, and see what it would be like. We might meet a few of our neighbors, learn of arrangements for round-ups, and hear news from the range generally. I left a goodly amount of cooked provisions for the boys, we hooked up our team to the lumber-wagon, made no change in our camp garb, and were off for town. We got a rather late start, there being no particular hurry, the meeting not being called till the next forenoon.

We reached Caldwell too late for supper, and got inveigled into a game of whist. We played until the gray of the morning, partaking moderately of some liquid refreshments. After the game broke up, it seemed as if a short walk would do me good, so I went out beyond the town for two or three miles. On my return, it being yet early, it occurred to me to take a nap. A corn-field was handy by, and, arranging a shock for comfort, I was soon lost in the land of dreams, not awakening until nine o'clock, and then with a start, not remembering the locality. Presently it all came back that the stock meeting was the place for me very soon.

Without breakfast I slipped into the meeting, taking a back seat against the wall and becoming interested at once. There seemed to be few of my acquaintances in the crowd, and instead of there being thirty or forty in attendance, as I expected, there were between two and three hundred present. There were very few cowboys in the throng, but a large number of fine-looking, well-dressed gentlemen, all of whom were strangers to me personally, and the majority of whom I had never heard of.

The meeting seemed to be well organized, and the speakers were on their feet continually. I listened quietly and patiently, not fully realiz- the portent of what was being said. The majority of them were smooth talkers and had evidently been on the floor before; but the longer I listened, the more apparent it became to me that they were either talking against time or because they enjoyed it themselves. Somehow the bulk of the convention seemed to me to be getting wearied with oratorical efforts, and were evidently waiting for some one to get down to business, or get up and talk about the matters they were there to decide upon. So interested did I become, that my costume of blue shirt, négligé tie, trousers in boots, supported by cartridge-belt, and hair uncombed, did not occur to me as out of place, so I leisurely rose during a lull in the convention. In a modest tone of voice, attracting the attention of the presiding officer, I said: "Mr. Chairman, I have listened with interest to the easy flow of language from the gentleman of that great commonwealth, Texas, and enjoyed it, as have many others here. I have heard with pleasure the silver tongue from Colorado, as well as other gentlemen from different localities. They have told us, or me at least, many new things; but, Mr. Chairman, I appeal to you, sir, that they are all a little wide of the mark. As I understand it, we are here to round up the living and skin the dead." Then I immediately sat down.

Such roars, yells, and cheers made me think of a political convention cheering to the echo some man who had perpetrated a lucky hit. As soon as the chair secured any sort of order, I was on my feet again, saying: "Mr. Chairman, I move you, sir, that a committee of five be appointed to formulate a plan of action, and under no circumstances appoint me, when so many older and wiser ones are present." The motion was carried with a whoop, the chair appointing five well-known men on the committee, none of whom refused to work.

There was another calm, and rising again, I said: "Mr. Chairman, we don't need any committee on credentials and resolutions; we are all cow-punchers together, and I do move you that this convention take a recess until two P. M., to give our committee a chance to work; and I further move that the balance of us become acquainted and refresh the inner man." This motion was carried with a will, and we had a general introduction all around and a very jolly time until the afternoon session.

Promptly at two o'clock the chair called the convention to order, but the committee was not ready to report, and short speeches were called for, but they did not seem to be much of a success, so it was agreed to adjourn until the next morning at nine, when the report would undoubtedly be ready. If ever men were interested in their business, it was that crowd of cattlemen. I never heard so much cow-talk before in all my life. We tried to play cards, but the decks remained unshuffled. We talked all day and we talked all night, and it was actually a difficult matter to get any one to stop long enough to get a quorum for the convention. It could not have been accomplished at all, only all were assured that the committee was ready to report.

The scope of that committee was great indeed! They reported all that was asked of them, and more too. They arranged about the skinning of the dead cattle—how the hides should be divided; of course giving the brand the preference. They arranged to start two bodies of round-up men, one from the extreme Southwest, or as far as the bulk of the cattle were known to have strayed; then they appointed a few trusty men to go on still further and gather every brand known to belong to the Strip. They did the same for the Southeast, and appointed a captain for each round-up party. The report contained much good advice, and many other things no man could remember; all of which, however, were of such grave importance that they were put in cold type, as, no doubt, the files of that great religious *Caldwell Weekly* could show, if produced.

To say that the report was received and the committee discharged would read all right, but how tame! The report went through without a dissenting voice, and with men on their feet in every direction, the cowboys, in their exuberance, standing on their seats and tossing those huge three- or four-pound hats to the top of the hall; fortunately for the hats, the ceilings were low. Mingled with the cheering could be heard the cowboy yell, which surely added zest to the occasion. Lack of breath called a halt—the chairman was powerless; no wonder, for he cheered and yelled until his throat closed on him.

After quiet was once more restored, some resolutions were offered and passed without debate and without demur. No one disputed anything or anybody. There is no doubt that a hurried resolution offered to the end that a war with England would prove a failure would have passed just the same. For a moment I thought of introducing a resolution immortalizing cattlemen and saying that the only great, legitimate, honorable and noblest calling, dating back beyond anything and everything, is the handling, tending, and herding of cattle. I came within an ace of moving just such a resolution; but my backbone gave way and it failed to materialize. Like the balance, it would have been adopted.

Finally there were no more excuses for motions or resolutions, every one seemed to have had his say and a number of says besides. The chairman inquired very earnestly, two or three times, if any one had anything more to offer, or motion to make, but no response. He looked sad, being so interested in the proceedings that it seemed to him as if the meeting ought to continue for all time, of course with an occasional recess for refreshments. His eye sought those of the heretofore fluent speakers, but there was no response. His eye grew dull, there was a calm almost saddening; the chairman was in a quandary. He would have talked himself, being a good single-handed talker, but before so many his thoughts seemed to have oozed out, or at least to have left him. What to do he did not know, and just when it was really becoming embarrassing, a man arose and moved that we proceed to ballot for officers for the ensuing year. How the president's eye brightened again; how quick he put that motion! It was as quickly carried.

The chair said that the first man to be elected was the president, and he would appoint four tellers to prepare the ballots—that was as far as he got. Some man jumped to his feet and said: "What is the use of going through all that rigmarole? Let us elect our officers by word of mouth. We all know who we want for president, and I move Ben Miller be elected to fill the position for one year." Old Uncle Steve Birchfield, for he was chairman laughed with glee and said: "That's right; that motion is entirely in order and here goes." I guess it was carried, by the noise—absence was in my line, and fresh air. My embarrassment fairly overcame me; a place where no one could see me was hunted and found.

All the customary officers were elected the same way, and the convention adjourned subject to call of the president just elected. My presence was carefully concealed the balance of the day, and I tried to get word to Mr. A—— that we ought to hook up and start for camp, but he was not to be found.

There was to be a ball given in honor of the stockmen, and it was my intention to skip it, but the fates were against me and I was dragged in bodily. Camp clothes seemed to be at a premium,—or, possibly, the wearers of them. It made no difference about one's costume, their presence was demanded. I danced a few times and slipped away, but was caught, taken back, and actually compelled to mount the musicians' platform in behalf of the cattlemen assembled, to thank the citizens of Caldwell for their kind hospitality and generous treatment. No stenographer was present, so those remarks will never go along down with the annals of time. Humanity has and will escape. Let us all be truly thankful. No criticism ever appeared. My English friend said, in his droll way, "You didn't do so bad, Ben." How incongruous it sounds; dancing stopped and a speech listened to. But fortunately for the speaker, no one objected, every one seemed happy, and the dancing went on.

Years after, a plain, blunt sort of a man called my thoughts back to our first cow convention, and he said, "Do you know what made you president of the Cattle Association?" I replied that nothing in particular occurred to me as the cause of it. "Why," said he, "when you praised the flowery fellows, and then quickly turned the subject by saying, 'But we are here to round up the living and skin the dead,' that single remark caught them all, so that you were slated right there. Your apparent innocence of not having said anything in particular, when, in fact and in truth, you had struck the key-note, did the business."

Perhaps this sounds egotistical, and maybe the truth should not always be spoken. This is one of the times when it has been, whether it should be or not.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The grass was showing up green in many localities and the cattle were hunting the best of it. Near the spring-holes and marshy places it looked the greenest, and right there was where the weak cattle would go. The consequence was that many of them got mired in the mud, and when discovered by the range-riders were pulled out, if it was possible to be done.

We employed a new cook and I rode with the other boys. The principal part of our duties was to ride along the ponds, streams, and by the springs, to help up the weak cattle. The two R—— brothers rode together, while Mr. A—— and I made a fair team. When we found an animal mired we attached our ropes to its horns, jumped on to our ponies, and with the rope firmly wound around the pommel of the saddle, gave the word, and then came the tug of war; and what a tug it was! In most instances we were able to drag the animal out high and dry, but occasionally we could do nothing; then we hunted up our partners and all four of us would pull, usually with success. In a few instances we failed entirely, and when that occurred a bullet from our ever-ready Colt's put the animal out of its misery.

We were successful in saving a good many of the weak ones, but the majority of those which got down were quite sure to die, more especially the native Texans. I was able to save the majority of my domestic stock, because after getting them out once they took kindly to feed and water placed for them, and the care they received usually brought them through. Sometimes after helping a Texan cow upon her feet, before she was really steady or able to stand at all well, she would lower head and horns, coming at us with a rush. Her weakness would prevent her doing any harm, the result only ending in a fall. Philanthropic efforts in that direction did not seem to be fully appreciated, rarely if ever meeting with a just reward.

The actions of the animal always vexed us, but it was nothing in comparison to our disgust when, having pulled one out of a bog-hole, high and dry on solid ground, placing hay and water beside it, to return the next morning and find it mired down in exactly the same place of the day before. Three or four occurrences of that kind certainly looked like premeditated suicide, whether so intended or not.

About this time one of our officious neighbors thought the grass far enough along, and started to burn off the old grass so as to give the new a better chance; in so doing he burned out his range and set fire to us. Knowing that we could not spare all our old grass yet, we all turned out and had a two days' siege fire-fighting, as usual managing to save quite a large part of our range; but it was the same old hard work over again, seeming so unnecessary that we scolded very hard, but that is all we ever did do. Our neighbor had by far the worst of it, and knew it was all his own fault as well as we could tell him.

As we stopped fighting the fire near midnight, we learned from Circle-Bar John that we were all of ten miles from camp, so, mounting our horses and giving them their heads, we were off with a yell. We didn't know the way, but the trusty beasts under us did, and without a skip, break or fall, kept up a good gallop to camp. Thirty minutes saw those ten miles covered; in a short time our horses were fed and we were sound asleep, completely worn out with our exertions. But we were up betimes the next morning. Our new cook had breakfast on the table, and before the sun peeped above the eastern sand-hills, we were in the saddle and away, intent on the duties of the day.

The youngest of the R—— brothers, John, started for Philadelphia, but Charles, the older one, remained steadfast and worked like a good one. A part of our camp had gone on the general round-up, so two or three of us were left to take care of what stock was still near the ranch. Beside that, we were making preparations to move into summer quarters over on the east part of our range. There we made use of the old dug-out built by our first neighbors, as well as our tent. We manufactured some cots to sleep on, so, barring flies and mosquitoes, we expected to do very well.

We left the old log cabin with regret, and took to our tent, which we put up near the dugout, hard by a small grove of timber, likewise a fine spring of water. The little sport we had had of late had consisted mostly in shooting water-fowl of different varieties, including some jack-snipe. We had a few chases after jack-rabbits and coyotes with our greyhounds, being in most instances quite successful. Now the round-ups were going on, so our time was taken up with our cattle, besides building a good corral for branding purposes, which we should need very soon. The weather was getting very warm, so it was like midsummer in the East, though it was only the first of May.

The exceedingly warm weather brought on some terrific storms. The rain came down in torrents, the wind blew a gale. Of course, our tent was torn to pieces, rendering it useless. We took to the dugout, which leaked badly; so take it all in all, we fared poorly for a few days. If we had not been the fortunate possessors of a car, nothing of our belongings could have been kept dry. Those days of rain didn't interfere with our work to speak of, and we attended to range matters nicely, besides completing our corral, including branding chute and all.

Owing to false reports, the western round-up party went farther south than there was any need of, and the consequence was they got into a row with some of the Cheyennes and had quite a time getting out of it. One day they got into a bear district down between the two Canadian rivers, and found the little black fellows quite plentiful. They captured and shot, all told, thirteen of them. They ran short of provisions, sending a courier to us to forward them some immediately, so Charles R—— took the team and wagon, hurrying for Anthony to lay in a supply.

The rains kept up until it was asserted that more water had fallen in a couple of weeks in the Territory than in three years previous. The wettings we got, for we were wet through for days and days, didn't seem to affect Charles R—— and Mr. A., or myself, but our cook was shaking with the chills, so that he started for the railroad for medicine and care. Once more the cooking fell on me, and it seemed perfectly natural to be over the stove again, although not altogether agreeable.

Going on the range over west with Charles R——, we found our stream, Big Sand Creek, out of its banks and not in condition to cross, but I wanted to get something out of my trunk in the old cabin, so supposing my bronco a good swimmer, as most cow ponies are, I plunged boldly in and was thrown into the middle of the stream, rapidly floating down. The horse made his way to shore, and I brought up by catching hold of a projecting bush. My partner was so full of laugh he was of no assistance whatever. Presently discovering that, I got mad, helped myself and got out, but with considerable difficulty. Emptying my boots and wringing out my clothing, in a short time I was ready for work. My horse was soon caught, and away we went as if nothing had happened, except a sly smile from my friend, which was aggravating, to say the least, but was passed by unnoticed.

The cattle were doing finely. I had very many young calves, and began to feel quite a sense of ownership. I wrote very encouragingly to my parents and friends, to one in particular, telling her to watch out for the coming fall, for if matters kept on as prosperously as I had every reason to believe they would, I should be very anxious to take on a new and different kind of a partner from any I had yet had, in case a satisfactory arrangement could be concluded. It was very evident that a few months more and a town would be my habitation—a town not very remote from the range, however.

I passed safely by another birthday, but it would not have occurred to me only my mother sent a remembrance. The mothers rarely forget anything pertaining to the home or home circle, yet they are not, as a rule, fully appreciated until a separation occurs.

The cattle began to come in from the round-ups, and we were busy locating them once more on their own range. It was not very difficult to do with the stock herd, but the steers were restless creatures, much more inclined to stray, hence more difficult to hold. The round-up was nearly ended, our cattle were mostly back on our range, with the exception of a few yet to hear from. The losses were surprisingly small when the severity of the winter was taken into consideration. Our men were all in with the exception of Mr. A.——, and with a little extra help we began to brand and mark our calves.

We were up at four in the morning, and with the exception of stopping for meals, worked faithfully until near night. As soon as it was fairly dark we all retired to rest and sleep, if we could escape the mosquitoes, which was almost impossible. Some nights it was so calm that the only way we could get away from them was to take our cots, going upon the highest point adjacent, and there we were partially exempt.

The work at which we were engaged then was about the hardest in the business, or in any line of business. It was such dusty and hot work, so annoying and troublesome, and could not be done slowly. It was very pleasant to the owner to see such a goodly number of handsome calves and such a fine per cent. of increase, but the work with them was something terrific. We were at it steadily for three weeks, until we were satisfied none were slighted, or at least none in our immediate neighborhood, and then the task was completed or nearly so. Afterward one or more of our men carried irons with them, so if they found unbranded calves following the mothers with our brand on, they roped the calf, built a fire, heated their irons and branded wherever found. Sometimes men have been known to brand calves whose parentage was not definitely ascertained, and in certain cases the wrong brand has been put on intentionally. But we believed, as a rule, our neighbors and ourselves were quite straight and honest about it. That was the intention anyhow, and cattle stealing among range neighbors was very rare.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The members of our camp looked rather pale, thin and played out generally. It was time for us to rest, but we had no leisure except in the middle of the day for two or three hours. We tried to sleep a little, but the heat and flies wouldn't permit of it. While we were in the saddle eight or ten hours, it was actually refreshing, being the most satisfactory rest we got. At night we could sleep, providing there was a good stiff breeze to drive the mosquitoes away. But the breeze had a disagreeable habit of going down with the sun.

Quiet nights we went prowling around, swinging our arms vigorously as if in training, each grimly asking the others what kind of a night's rest he was enjoying, actually indulging in little sarcasms and what we at the time deemed witticisms, in regard to much sleep being injurious to the race. We referred to the Napoleonic idea of three or four hours being enough for a man, concluding that heretofore we had been in the habit of sleeping too long.

Making light of tribulations is half the battle, it certainly being so in our case. We concluded to quit worrying, take all proper precautions, letting the rest take care of itself. In the past we had taken a great deal more trouble on ourselves than there was any call for. As the storms of the past winter came in quick succession, one after another, it didn't seem possible for the cattle to survive; we having our worry all for nothing, for our losses were really insignificant.

It seemed remarkable how a cow, well along in years, could have her calf in midwinter with snow five or six inches deep on the ground, the mercury not far above zero, and both of them live. Yet such was the rule on our range with few exceptions. There seems to have been a provision of nature concerning the matter, beyond our knowledge.

It was remarkable to note how much foreign and Eastern capital was coming out in our section for investment in cattle. It seemed impossible in that year of our Lord, eighteen hundred and eighty-one, to overdo it; but before the eighties were all past, anything and everything seemed possible, and there is nothing that human beings cannot overdo. We met many foreigners with money to invest in ranches, the majority of them being English, although many nationalities were represented, even the conservative Scotch, who know a good thing when they see it. Some who came from abroad were the younger sons of the nobility, and all that we met had fine educations, were great travelers, and seemed well supplied with money.

I went up to Caldwell to pay my taxes, and there met Major Lipe, the treasurer of the Cherokee Nation, with his able corps of assistants. They were right jolly, gentlemanly Indians, and while up to all the tricks of the trade, were certainly very pleasant men with whom to deal. We met them in a business and social way many times afterward, and always most agreeably. I took our man, John C——, up to the railroad. He was going to take a vacation, going home to see his parents in Georgia, for the first time in nine years. They were people in the humble walks of life, but their meeting was just as much to them as though they were the proudest in the land, perhaps more so. We told him to go and stay until his friends tired of him, not to worry about the cattle, and to return when range longings called him.

In Caldwell I learned more and more of the stock craze. Some of the stockmen told me that cattle were actually higher on the range than in the yards at Kansas City, and that all North America, or a large share of it, would shortly be on hand to buy. They further said: "Put up the price on your range and herd to ten times what it is worth, and some one will snap it up." Some of my new-made acquaintances did set a price four or five times the value of all their holdings, and when they were taken up, either backed out or sold and bought right in again. There were not the surface indications similar to what so many of us have seen in a real-estate boom. The excitement might have been there, but the brass bands and free lunches were absent. We stuck to our chosen calling and our holdings, thinking what was so valuable in others' eyes, was very good to keep.

Rumors were rife that it was only a question of time until grass and water would be denied us in the B. I. T. It was said that sentiment was liable to receive U. S. backing, so that we cattlemen be removed. That sentiment consisted, for the most part, in a sort of a dog-in-the-manger idea, that what every one cannot have a part and parcel of, no one shall have at all. Meantime, we listened to rumors, paid our taxes to the Cherokees, and went right along making hay while the sun nearly always shone. If the stockmen were removed from the Territory, it occurred to us that some farmers close to the south line of Kansas, in counties west of Sumner, would miss them; it is possible that our idea was wrong, but not probable. We felt some distance from the moving, acting world, which went its gait never missing us and never missing the purchase of the fine beeves we raised.

News with us was very rare just then. President Garfield was reported as assassinated, but no one seemed able to tell us whether he was living or dead. Our herd was split in two, and another man, besides myself, with only a grub wagon and a couple of blankets apiece, were five miles below camp, holding our beef herd, which consisted of about fifteen hundred head all told. They were restless and hard to hold, especially at night. But they took on flesh better by themselves than when mixed up with the stock herd. It was the hardest work of my life, particularly when it rained. During the three or four weeks of it we had half a dozen severe storms; one of them was something terrific and grand at the same time. We were both in the saddle all night and the cattle drifted on us about four miles. They did not run, but would not lie down. The lightning was continuous, as was the thunder. It looked as if the electricity played back and forth over the backs of the animals, so that we fancied we could see the sparks flying off from them. It seemed as if a number of them must be killed, and we were very much frightened for ourselves. We had poor food and irregular meals. Our rest was badly broken, and our bed was the earth, with a storm coat under or over us, as the case might be. One was on guard for two hours, while the other slept a short distance from the herd. Then the sleeper was awakened and took his turn of riding slowly around the animals, or taking his station quietly watching, while the breathing of the cattle was about the only sound on the night air. We were getting those beeves ready for market; they were putting on flesh in good shape; and in a few weeks more would be ready to ship to the commission men in Kansas City or Chicago, as we should elect. But I couldn't stand it longer and didn't intend to. I lost between fifteen and twenty pounds in three weeks, so made up my mind it would pay better to go to cattle headquarters at Caldwell and watch the market, hiring a man in my place, which I did and heaved a sigh of relief.

The cattle business as practiced or managed on the open range was certainly very healthy, very alluring, and was proving very lucrative, but some of it was a trifle too rich for my blood, and that part was holding a bunch of beeves, with insufficient help, food and sleep. I never undertook it just that way again.

I found Caldwell filled with cattlemen and strangers, anxious to take a hand in our business. The market at Kansas City, St. Louis and Chicago was rather weak and fluctuating, but that made no difference, for men were there with money to buy and nothing would stop them. They paid the prices asked, in many instances accepting the count of the number of cattle from that of last fall's books. The town was indeed a bee-hive, and no mining locality could be livelier. The hotels, restaurants, outfitting stores and saloons provided benches outside, and there dozens and dozens of men sat and whittled and talked trade all day long and away into the night. An Eastern man on arrival would be rather inclined to make light of the whittling part of it, but in less than a week he would have his knife sharpened and would be doing as "the Romans do." Very shortly the men would cut the softwood benches out from under them, and the citizens then put in hardwood seats and furnished a supply of pine expressly for the cattle dealers to cut into shavings.

Many a trade for hundreds and even thousands of head of cattle, to be delivered at a certain time and place for so much per head, have I seen made on those benches, both men whittling as if their lives depended on it. I noticed a few of the Texans, when offering so much, whittled away from themselves; when offering to take a certain sum, they invariably drew the knife in toward themselves. It seemed appropriate and possibly signified something.

I read in the papers that Billy the Kid, of Las Vegas and Santa Fé fame, had been shot by the same marshal, Pat Garrett, who had him and his two men in charge when I ran across them some months before. It seemed they all escaped from the prison in Santa Fé, assisted by one of Billy's female friends, and immediately made their way to their old stamping ground. Garrett took up the trail once more, never resting until, some months after, he found the Kid in bed at the home of a friend called Maxwell. Garrett didn't wait to take him prisoner, but poured a load of buckshot into him as he raised up in bed, and that settled it, Billy taking some of the medicine he had been accustomed to administer in such liberal doses to others.

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CHAPTER XXXVI.

Our partner, Charles R——, and myself were called to Chicago to meet relatives and friends concerning a new deal in business. It was midsummer and intensely warm. Our trip was made with so much discomfort that the range seemed preferable. Men representing different commission firms learned of our intended journey, and passes were urged on us. They knew we would have something ready for market shortly, and desired to lay us under obligations. Even our calling had its tricks, but it seemed to us freer from them than any other. The knowledge of our trip leaking out around, we were besieged with commissions. One lady wished me to get her a pair of earrings, another a dress, while an Indian wanted me to get him some tablespoons and other articles now forgotten. Upon our arrival at Chicago, our friends not having put in an appearance, we were able to execute all the purchases, besides doing a few errands for ourselves; for one lately from the wilderness, upon reaching a large city, needs many things.

All the friends arrived in good season, and the half dozen of us immediately began to lay plans for a ranch in the Pan Handle of Texas, and an entirely new partnership. It was my intention, afterward carried out, to take some stock in the new concern, but to keep my present holding in the Territory. To do that, money had to be borrowed, but that was not a difficult matter with plenty of collateral. We settled the main points of the deal, had a delightful visit in Chicago, leaving it with regret. Our English partner was on hand, going into the new deal with us, and everything promised finely. Our business and pleasure quickly finished, we took our departure.

George C—— had joined us from the East, and was also in the new deal; so Charlie R——, Mr. A——, George C—— and myself started Southwest, while our other two friends went East. We reached Caldwell in due season, and, while the others went to camp, I remained in town with plenty of matters to look after, but more particularly to keep track of the market, so as to notify the boys when to ship. Meantime, I had a little matter of my own to look after. It was my intention to live in Caldwell and either to buy or build a home and go in debt for it, following the advice of a prominent man, especially those about to marry. That seeming to be my case, the fair one and I had determined that the important event should take place the following month, but we were doomed to disappointment for the time being and compelled to wait.

It came about in this way: I had an ordinarily pleasant paternal parent, who sometimes would listen to my sage advice and condescend to consult with me. But on this occasion he hied himself off on a two-months' jaunt to Europe, and went without a word except good-bye. I had a mind to get married in his absence, but that would hardly be treating him with proper respect; then, too, he might remember us with a slight token of his esteem, pecuniarily, in case he were present. These reasons, coupled with others, induced a postponement of our wedding until some time in November. Meantime, I endeavored to possess my soul in patience.

I was boarding at the first brick hotel in Caldwell, kept by a young couple from Kentucky, or, at least, the lady hailed from there and her husband from a short distance away, just over the line in Indiana. It is, perhaps, superfluous to say that she knew how to ride horseback. The ladies, so I am informed, in that grand old State, begin riding in the saddle or horseback at the age of six or a trifle younger. Years of such practice makes the majority of them fine horsewomen at sixteen or thereabouts. They ride, move and sit in the saddle with the same grace and ease they manifest in the drawing-room; being to the manner born in either case. It is impossible for anyone to acquire ease and grace and be perfectly at home in the saddle unless the training is begun in early life. The principle is nearly the same as with a contortionist or acrobat, who must begin in childhood to make a success. The straightout Texas cowboy can hardly remember before he was in the saddle, and having walked so little was undoubtedly the cause of his small feet. No matter what their height, they rarely ever wore over a number five boot, and four was more frequently the size. I was often amused to see men from the North and East, who became cowboys and fairly good ones, putting number five and six boots on number seven and eight feet. The suffering they underwent in the cold winter days would hardly pay for satisfied pride. They doctored their chilblains and never complained, or, at least, professed to make light of them.

It seemed to me very foolish, reminding me of instances, mentioned as *facts*, where ladies have worn their shoes so small and have so pinched themselves, that they were obliged to have an occasional toe cut off. We actually recoil when looking at the foot of a Chinese woman; it is on the principle of throwing stones while living in glass houses. We need not go away to foreign lands for idiosyncrasies, peculiarities, crankisms and follies; we are bedridden with them all, and more, too, right here at home. This is no news, and sounds quite like a prominent characteristic of moralizing by our present White House occupant, but a repetition of it won't do any harm.

Notwithstanding the heat and my desire to remain in town, one of our camps needed a cook for some days, so they called me down there. The call was imperative and had to be obeyed. Mr. A——, Charlie R—— and George C—— had heard of a ranch for sale in the Pan Handle of Texas, so they decided to run over there and look into the matter. It was only a little drive of three hundred miles across country, and they hooked up to a spring wagon, putting in camp necessaries, including coffee pot, pan, Dutch oven, beside a week's provisions, and set out as gleefully as if they were going to a country fair. A journey like that would have appalled us a few years before, but later we thought nothing of it. Dozens and dozens of miles had to be traveled, with long stretches uninhabited, over a dim trail, oftentimes no trail at all; but the boys were equal to it, as practice had made them so, and they felt as sure of reaching their destination as they would to start for Kansas City by rail.

I was quite busy with many details and writing letters East, especially to the one so soon to become my best and surest partner. We were discussing the ceremony, and it was the wish of her parents to give a fine affair in the way such things are managed, and which are all well enough for those who enjoy dress parade and being objects of admiration to relatives and friends. It is all right for people with such proclivities and plenty of money. I had neither, and the young lady kindly deferred to me. I proposed to her to bring along our parents, meeting me half way, or at Chicago, and it would save a world of trouble. It would not tax the pocketbooks of any of our friends or relatives, and whatever silver-plated stuff we seemed to need, we could get trusted for or go without. These ideas have rather an independent ring about them, which is all right. When a cow-puncher is hampered or handicapped by any old cut, dried and frayed-out customs, and cannot cut loose from them as he would cut out a sprightly two-year-old from the main bunch, he belies his calling and is in very deed "a tenderfoot," and there is nothing in him.

But we, parents and all, agreed to the programme, so that settled it, no one else having to be consulted. All we had to wait for was my father's return from across the big pond. I wrote him a letter about this time, which is perhaps worthy of space in this maiden effort, so it is appended:

MY DEAR FATHER:—Mother sent me your address, and I thought while on a foreign shore, a short letter from your youngest might not come amiss. It seems to me that I can imagine, to a certain extent at least, how you must be enjoying yourself, knowing so well your sight-seeing capacity. Traveling never seems to fatigue you; looking at new things only exhilarates, and your congenial companions also so appreciative of the world of marvels and wonder on every side—all together must drive away thoughts of business, cares and anxieties to such a degree as not only make the trip most enjoyable but beneficial as well. I trust, and am sure, you are not overburdened with the heat as we have been, but that you are enjoying cool and refreshing weather. Until two days ago the mercury has ranged daily from one hundred to one hundred and eight degrees above zero in the shade, without any cooling rains. At last the flood gates have opened, and this entire section is rejoicing in refreshing showers. The country takes on a green hue once more, and all the stockmen are happy over the prospect of good grass and plenty of water for the fall and winter. My stock are doing finely, the cattle market is most excellent, and I have lost only one calf since the first day of April, which is pretty good, out of a bunch of a thousand head. The cattle market has boomed here all summer, and the amount of money that has changed hands in the deals known to have been made, would run up into the hundred thousands of dollars. All ranchmen, owners and raisers of cattle, have made money, while a few speculators and shippers have lost money. In my last letter from mother, she said you had reached England safely, but had heard no particulars of your voyage. I trust you did not have to pay serious tribute to old Neptune, but that the voyage was a pleasant and beneficial one. I should like above all things, to receive a letter from you descriptive of your journey, but could not conscientiously ask you to take one moment of your time from sight-seeing to write me. I will patiently await your return home, and then shall listen to your account of your trip with great interest. Please give my love to your delightful traveling companions, your sister and niece, assuring them of my heartiest wishes for a pleasant journey and safe return to you all. From what I can learn, everything is moving along nicely at the old home, and I know it is so with me, for in spite of perspiring continually, I tip the scales at two hundred pounds.

Your aff. son,
B. S. M.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHILE the boys were arranging to buy a ranch in the Pan Handle of Texas, it happened that an opportunity was presented to dispose of the beeves. A buyer made me a most excellent offer for the entire lot, but would not give me quite as much for mine alone. Figuring on the market and what the beeves would net us in the yards at Kansas City, it did not seem to me as if the buyer could make any particular profit. Without consultation, I took the man at his offer, learning afterward that he only came out whole. Mr. A—— and Charles R—— were well pleased with the sale, and inclined to be somewhat complimentary. The two of them bought for their newly-formed company the old Springer Ranch, not far from Mobeetie, Texas, paying all it was worth, but ranches were selling high, and in a very short time they could have sold out at a price largely in excess of that paid. It was a good bargain, so I effected a moderate loan in order to take an interest with them.

I did not investigate the matter at all, but took their word for it and went in. Such methods of doing business would be considered rather lax in the East, but the way everything was conducted on the range, there was no chance for loss. I had the utmost confidence in the judgment of my partners, and never was uneasy a moment about it. Afterward everything came out all right, the interest only remaining in my hands three or four months, and closing out at the end of that period for nearly four times what I put in.

While spending the days and weeks in Caldwell, talking cattle nearly all the time, we varied the programme with hunts and chases. The prairie chickens were ripe, and so also were the plover. So many an afternoon was whiled away over across the line into the Territory, where there were no farmers to shout out at us, "Get out of my field! What are you doing there, frightening my stock and killing my birds?" Of course, the farmers own all of the prairie chickens and quail that happen to fly over their possessions, just the same as Dr. Seward Webb owns all of the deer which happen to roam around over his thirty-thousand-acre preserves up in the North Woods, and they are going to have them, too. Fortunately, we did not care to dispute their title to anything on their land; we did not have to, for there right at us, was that great stretch of land known as "The Cherokee Outlet," properly named, too, and it abounded in game, with no one to molest or make us afraid. We met none but cattlemen and cowboys, and they were all glad to see us, giving all the information in their power, furnishing us with many a meal and glad to do it.

I had three dogs in town with me, and of course my faithful old pointer Jane headed the list. She preferred to hunt with me, but would work with anyone else, so of course was much in demand. On one or two occasions she was out with parties who were such poor shots that she left them, in disgust, and returned to town alone. My other two dogs were greyhounds, brother and sister, and handsome animals they were, too. I boarded at the principal hotel, keeping my greyhounds tied up, for fear they might follow some outfit away. It was very amusing, in the morning and evening, when let out for exercise, the manner in which they ran up and down the main street. They never went in the road, but always on the sidewalk, to the consternation of passers-by. Their rush was something terrific, and they seemed perfectly heedless of whom or what they ran into. I finally had to give them their exercise, running jack-rabbits, and many a glorious chase we had. At such times it was no uncommon thing for twenty-five or thirty ladies and gentlemen to turn out, part in carriages and part in the saddle. Among those on horseback was the dashing Kentuckian, our landlady of "The Leland," whose horse could be seen among the closest to the hounds. With good ground to run over and a fair start, we were quite sure of our rabbit, and four or five in an afternoon were not uncommon.

Thus mixing in plenty of pleasure with some business, the time passed rapidly along, but none too fast for me. I was in that transcendent state of bliss which some novelists so prettily describe, and which rarely ever comes to a young man more than once in a lifetime, so I am informed. Many a time it was hinted that my thoughts were wool-gathering, and the persons making such statements were not undeceived.

I was making winter arrangements, buying corn, putting up hay, plowing fireguards, or rather I was superintending all these things, besides many others. I joined a winter pool for the easier and better holding of our cattle. Some of the parties were new neighbors on the east. Others were the Pryor brothers on our north, who were managers and shareholders of a St. Joe cattle company, the most of the non-residents being bankers, who of course always have plenty of money, or plenty at their command. On our west was the noted firm of Drumm & Snider, the largest cattle dealers in our section; very able cattlemen, a trifle crusty, a little cranky, and very set in their ways. The first member of the firm, Major Andy Drumm, was a Forty-niner, and one of the earliest holders in the Strip, having held the cattle at the time of the Osage Indian raid, and said to have been the only man who remained with them in those ticklish times. He was really a very pleasant man to meet, polite to the ladies, with a gruff exterior hiding a generous heart. He it was, who, when he heard of our advent in his neighborhood, remarked to his foreman, "What are those d——d New Yorkers doing up so close to us? Tell them to get out." He had been so in the habit of looking on that region for miles around as belonging to him, that although he hadn't cattle enough to eat off the grass, it ruffled his fur to have us swing in and quietly locate there. But we were so well settled before he realised it, that we had a foothold too firm to be ousted from it. Anyhow, he took his medicine philosophically, and concluded it best not to try to oust us. Mr. Andy Snider was one among the most prominent commission-men in Kansas City, and together they made a great team. Our range adjoined theirs, and we became well acquainted with their camp, getting along nicely with them. There were two men on our south, across Salt Fork, who were from Watkins, New York. They had a fine range and a large number of cattle. On our east were some young men from the Eastern States; and take them all and all, we had most delightful neighbors. We held cattle for one or two parties at a certain sum per capita, per year, and it all helped toward paying expenses. We had some fine beeves that belonged to one Treadwell, who hailed from New York City, and whose father had been a furrier on Broadway for upwards of forty years.

The boys had returned from the Pan Handle, after buying a ranch of a prominent cattleman by name of Tuttle, the same man we helped in the Indian raid of October, '78; the same man whose horses were run into town because two of his men thought us, in our horse-racing antics, a band of Indians, and drove their horses to town for safety as they supposed, being afterward discharged because they could not tell the difference between a rollicking lot of men and Indians on the warpath.

The time had come when my partners and I were to separate. My cousin, George C——, sold me his cattle with the Circle-bar brand on; so from this on I was to run the brand alone. There was some little disagreement, causing our old foreman, John C——, to leave us; so the one-time well-digger, Wallace M——, who began with us as a cook, was made foreman, manager and general factotum. The boys pulled out with their herd, and it gave me a feeling of loneliness and sadness difficult to bear. But human beings are too buoyant to remain sad for any length of time, and so it was with us. The cattle and the business needed a great deal of attention, so everybody had enough to do and to think of without repining. I allowed my men a brand of their own if they wished and felt inclined to put their earnings in cattle. The consequence was, my present foreman had a few head, and my former man, John, took away enough cattle with him so that he sold them for between four and five thousand dollars. In those days of prosperous times on the range, all a cowboy had to do to become well fixed, was to save his earnings and put his money in stock. In different localities it was said that some of the wickedly industrious ones put their brand on animals belonging to other parties, and their herds rapidly assumed large proportions. Such things usually happened so far away that they never came under our personal observation. It was generally conceded to be a good idea to allow assistants to have a brand of their own, as they certainly must manifest more interest in the entire herd.

It was now nearing the appointed time when I was anticipating taking on a life partner, and all arrangements for a few weeks' leave of absence were easily completed. My chief man and those under him were very capable, and everything connected with the range was perfectly safe in their hands.

At my last appearance at the ranch before starting East, I quietly remarked to the boys: "If you will excuse me for a few weeks, I believe I will go away and get married." They agreed that it was a matter of some little moment, so they would try and get along without me, but not to be gone any great length of time. When informed that my range days were probably ended, so far as remaining there regularly was concerned, they put on long faces and looked grieved; perhaps some of it was put on, but the grief was there just the same. When they learned that only a few miles would intervene and we should often meet, it gave them an excuse to smile once more; and then they all contributed their quota of sage advice. To be sure, none of them had ever been married, but they were thoroughly posted in regard to all the details, duties, rights and principles involved. Their advice was most excellent, and in later years I trust they have all practiced what they preached.

I slipped away from Caldwell without embarrassment, hardly anyone knowing my destination or motive for departure. I had the pleasure of meeting my future bride in Chicago, with the parents on both sides. I had secured fine apartments at the Sherman House, and the day before Thanksgiving, we proceeded to the home of one of Chicago's most celebrated preachers, where we were quietly and simply joined. Everything passed off in fine shape, there being only one hitch—we were hitched.

Books, novels and romances, to be orthodox, end with a wedding; so does this one. The three years of my cowboy life, while not one continual round of pleasure, never lacked for a halo of romance, and its complete success made our marriage possible and practicable.

THE END.

(OVER.)

NOTE.

THE sequel to this work will shortly follow under the title of "Five Years a Cattleman." In it I will tell the true inwardness of events in the cattle business in the prosperous early eighties in the Indian Territory; the formation of "The Cherokee Strip Live Stock Association," for the purpose of self-protection; leasing lands from the Indians; and all the details of those wild and woolly times when cattle barons quietly made money, and let a few hostile Kansas and Missouri papers print their adverse criticisms and articles, without honoring them by any notice whatever.

I had the honor of being the first president of the Association, which position I held for three and a half years, until I resigned it. In this work I will try and be modest and quiet as becomes me, ever bearing in mind that I am only an apprentice, a postulant, as it were. I shall tell of the cattle barons' leasing of lands from the Cherokees, the direct contradiction of all unfriendly newspapers, indeed, the contradiction of almost everything which has ever appeared in print. I shall tell what a Boomer was, of their influence on legislation, and of what they did toward opening a part of the Indian Territory to settlement, together with the characteristics, traits and actions of the leading Boomers. I will write of many whole-souled, open-hearted cattlemen and cowboys, and will mention very few of the other kind.

AUTHOR.

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